

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



JOHN WALSH
LT. GOVERNOR

October 15, 2013

RTTT/Early Learning Challenge Fund
The Honorable Arne Duncan
The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan and Secretary Sebelius:

Montana's prosperous future depends on the investments we make today. Those made in our children are the most valuable. That's why I ask for your consideration of the State of Montana for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Competition.

As Governor, I am committed to doing everything I can for Montana's youngest learners. Through providing leadership on policy development, raising public awareness, and overseeing the implementation of early childhood programs, I have made early learning and development a top priority for my Administration.

We know that comprehensive, high-quality early childhood programs improve school readiness, close the achievement gap, increase high school graduation rates, and prepare the next generation of workers and parents. We also know that starting at kindergarten is simply too late, as ninety percent of brain development occurs before age five. Language and literacy development begin at birth and gaps in achievement appear well before entering kindergarten. Children involved in early education do better in math and English, are much more likely to graduate from high school and are one-third less likely to be arrested as a juvenile. In fact, every dollar we invest in early childhood education returns up to nine dollars to our communities in Montana.

That's why access to early learning and development is paramount to my Administration. And that's why it's critical we take advantage of this exciting opportunity to promote the health, safety, supportive environments, and school readiness of zero to five year-old children in Montana.

Montana is ranked 28th out of 50 states in overall child well-being. Only 22.5 percent of 4-year-olds in Montana are enrolled in pre-K, Head Start or special education programs. Forty-seven percent of low-income kindergartners in the state are likely to have attended a center-based program, (including Head Start) prior to kindergarten, compared to 66 percent of higher-income children.

The need is clear, which is why I have convened a historic collaborative effort amongst the Governor's Office, the Office of Public Instruction, the Board of Public Education, the Montana University System, the Department of Public Health and Human Services, the State Library, and private partnerships. This cross-agency and interdisciplinary collaboration has helped us formulate a

comprehensive early learning and development vision for Montana. Montana's early childhood plan will:

- Ensure the **Health** of Montana kids.
We will expand access to quality services for children and families, especially to low-income, rural and tribal communities, all while increasing the coordination of wrap-around services.
- Provide **Safe and Supportive** environments for Montana kids.
We will align standards for early childhood providers, engage community stakeholders and create partnership with families. We will also strengthen and promote the early childhood workforce so that teachers and providers are adequately compensated and trained to deal with trauma and early development.
- Make all Montana kids **School Ready**.
We will prepare all children to be ready for kindergarten, shrinking the achievement gap.

No investment is more valuable than ensuring the health, support, and early learning and development of Montana's kids. Thank you for the opportunity to augment Montana's efforts to do just that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Bullock", with a stylized flourish at the end.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor



Montana
Office of Public Instruction
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent

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October 15, 2013

RTT Early Learning Challenge Fund
The Honorable Arne Duncan
The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
400 Maryland Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan and Secretary Sebelius:

On behalf of the Office of Public Instruction, I am pleased to support Montana's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application. It is critically important to the future of our state that children with high needs are afforded access to high-quality early learning so they can reach their full potential and succeed in school and throughout their lives.

Montana is a vast rural state with a small population and we have a proud tradition of government and communities working together to tackle some of our biggest challenges. This proposal builds on the strong collaboration of community leaders, early childhood educators, K-12 education, higher education, private foundations, state and tribal governments to ensure that in Montana our most vulnerable children gain the knowledge and skills they need to be ready for kindergarten.

Governor Steve Bullock and I share the commitment to expand high quality preschool education in our state. There is no more important investment in our state than the investment in our youngest learners. I urge your support of Montana's Early Learning Challenge grant.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Denise Juneau

V. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The State must meet the following requirements to be eligible to compete for funding under this program:

(a) The State has not previously received an RTT-ELC grant.

(b) The Lead Agency must have executed with each Participating State Agency a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other binding agreement that the State must attach to its application, describing the Participating State Agency's level of participation in the grant. (See section XIII.) At a minimum, the MOU or other binding agreement must include an assurance that the Participating State Agency agrees to use, to the extent applicable--

- (1) A set of statewide Early Learning and Development Standards;
- (2) A set of statewide Program Standards;
- (3) A statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and
- (4) A statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and progression of credentials.

List of Participating State Agencies:

The applicant should list below all Participating State Agencies that administer public funds related to early learning and development, including at a minimum: the agencies that administer or supervise the administration of CCDF, the section 619 of part B of IDEA and part C of IDEA programs, State-funded preschool, home visiting, Title I of ESEA, the Head Start State Collaboration Grant, and the Title V Maternal and Child Care Block Grant, as well as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care, the State's Child Care Licensing Agency, and the State Education Agency.

For each Participating State Agency, the applicant should provide a cross-reference to the place within the application where the MOU or other binding agreement can be found. Insert additional rows if necessary. The Departments will determine eligibility.

Participating State Agency Name (Indicate the Lead Agency)	MOU Location in Application	Funds/Program(s) administered by the Participating State Agency
Department of Public Health and Human Services (Lead Agency)	Appendix Page 1	CCDF, Part C of IDEA, home visiting, Head Start State Collaboration Grant, Title V Maternal and Child Care Block Grant, State Advisory Council on Early childhood Education and Care (Best Beginnings Advisory Council), Child Care Licensing
Office of Public Instruction	Appendix Page 6	State Education Agency, Part B of IDEA
Montana University System/ Office of the Commissioner	Appendix Page 13	

of Higher Education		
Montana State Library	Appendix Page 18	

(c) There must be an active Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program in the State, either through the State under section 511(c) of Title V of the Social Security Act, as added by section 2951 of the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (Pub. L. 111-148), or through an eligible non-profit organization under section 511(h)(2)(B).

The State certifies that it has an active MIECHV program in the State, either through the State or through an eligible non-profit organization. The Departments will determine eligibility.

☒ Yes

☐ No

MONTANA EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE

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CORE AREA SECTION A – Successful State System

(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development. (20 points)

The extent to which the State has demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services for Children with High Needs, as evidenced by the State's—

(a) Financial investment, from five years ago to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period;

(b) Increasing, from the previous five years to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs;

(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices; and

(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices.

Montana is the Treasure State. And our greatest treasure is our children. But, too many of those children are suffering from poverty or live in high need communities. Too many families lack support and information to prepare their young children to be ready for kindergarten. Though Montana has made great progress in recent years, we are one of only ten states in the U.S. that does not have state-funded preschool.¹ In partnership with the State Superintendent Denise Juneau and the Office of Public Instruction, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, and the Governor's Office Executive Branch, Montana is prepared to take on this Early Learning Challenge and make a difference for children – to honor our most important treasure by implementing this High Quality Plan to improve school readiness for children with high needs in our State.

The frontier-rural nature of Montana, especially its geographic size, population, and demographic characteristics, presents special challenges to building a coordinated statewide system of early learning. Montana is the nation's fourth largest State, encompassing 147,046 square miles. Traveling from Montana's western to eastern border is like traveling from Washington D.C. to Indianapolis. While large in physical size, Montana has a population of just over one million and a population density of 6.2 persons per square mile, compared to 79.6 in the U.S.² Urban residents are concentrated within six "metropolitan" areas with populations greater than 50,000; rural residents are scattered across Montana's 56 counties,

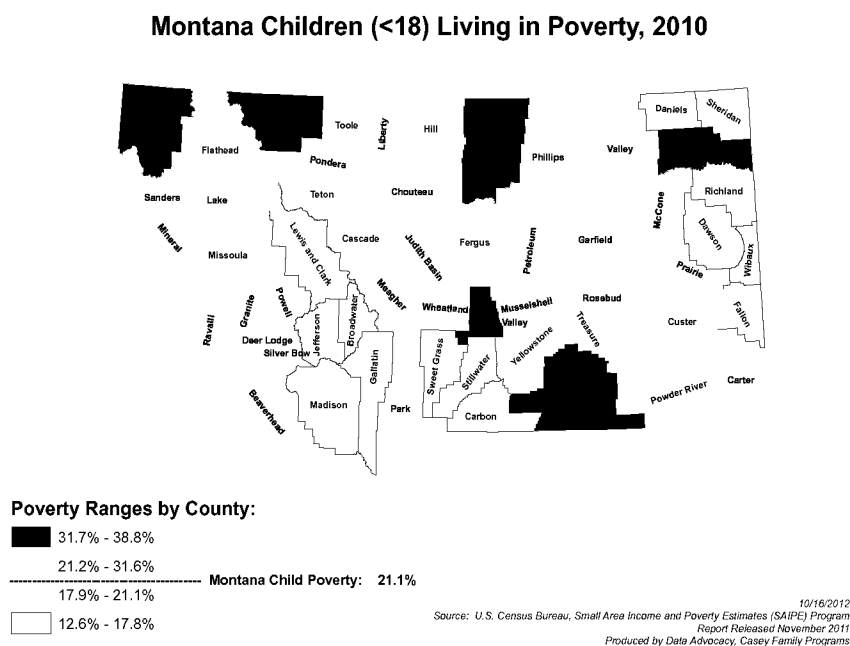
¹ The State of Preschool 2012. National Institute on Early Education Research, 2013.

² US Census, 2010

30 of which are classified as “frontier” counties with three or fewer persons per square mile.³ Twenty-six percent of all children in Montana live in these rural and frontier communities.

Montana’s population is 91% white, 7% American Indian, and 2% Hispanic or Latino.⁴ There are seven tribal reservations in the State that are home to 11 federally-recognized tribes. Each reservation has its own sovereign government and each tribe its own distinct cultural heritage. The majority of American Indians, approximately 64,000 people, live on these reservations, including nearly 6,000 children under the age 5.⁵

Throughout the State many of our residents face job, housing, and food insecurity and limited access to affordable health care. According to the US Census Bureau, 15% of Montanans are living in poverty compared to 12% nationwide.⁶ The number of children living in poverty is much higher. Forty-six percent of all Montana children ages 0 to 5 live in families that qualify for the Special Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and 62% are currently enrolled in Medicaid.⁷



³ US Census Bureau, 2000, Montana Department of Commerce, 2002

⁴ US Census, 2010

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey and; 2010 U.S. Census TIGER/Line Shapefile

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

⁷ National Center For Children in Poverty, 2010

In addition to living with the effects of extreme poverty, American Indian children also face particular challenges related to school readiness and a persistent achievement gap later in their school years. In 2012, the graduation rate in Montana for American Indian children was only 63%, compared to 85% of their white peers.

Fourteen percent of all Montana's children, an estimated 30,000 children, have special health care needs.⁸ These children live in every corner of the State and frequently have limited access to the care they need due to geographic challenges and the lack of health care providers in rural and frontier counties. 52% of children with special health care needs live in families with incomes below 200% of federal poverty, much higher than the national average of 41%. Montana children with special health care needs are also significantly less likely to have consistent and adequate public or private health insurance, to be screened early and continuously for special health care needs, or be able to easily access community-based services. More than 19% of these children receive no preventive services, such as well-baby check-ups, compared to 9% nationwide.

Montana's Commitment to Early Learning and Healthy Child Development

The state has been promoting efforts to build a coordinated system of early learning and development so that *all* young children, and especially those with high needs, have the best opportunity for development and the skills they need to succeed in school. Throughout this reform effort, Montana's vision has been resolute:

"If we are serious about training tomorrow's workers, our commitment must begin not when our kids first enter college or the workforce, but rather when they first enter the world. We can't wait until kindergarten before we take an interest. The evidence is compelling: every dollar we invest in early childhood education returns up to \$9 to our communities. Early learning programs work. Children involved in early education do better in math and English, are much more likely to graduate."

Governor Steve Bullock, 2013 State of the State Address

⁸ Children with Special Health Care Needs in Montana (2012). Department of Public Health and Human Services. The definition of children with special health care needs comes from the National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs : "Children who met at least one of the following: those whose conditions result in functional limitations, those whose conditions are managed with prescription medications only, those whose conditions result in above routine use of medical, mental health, or other services, and those whose conditions require prescription medicine and above routine use of services."

“The Montana Office of Public Instruction works to ensure that every student receives a quality public education no matter their background, their heritage, their economic status or geographic location. We know that children who have the opportunity to participate in quality preschool programs gain the foundation they need to be ready for Kindergarten and to succeed throughout their academic years.”

Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau

The State is now poised with strong leadership in place, a systems reform agenda highlighting coordination and alignment, a dedication to prioritizing resources to better support children with high needs, and a focus on engaging families and other caregivers in authentic partnership to improve the kindergarten readiness of *all* Montana children.

Montana’s History of Commitment to Early Care and Education

In 2003, the State received an Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant from the federal government for \$140,000 to support cross-division coordination designed to better align services. With this grant, the Family and Community Health Bureau and the Early Childhood Services Bureau began focused discussions leading to coordination and collaboration within the early childhood system to create a more *comprehensive service approach focused on health, mental health, family support, parent leadership, and early care and education*. The work through this grant enabled broader conversations related to young children, which continued to build in subsequent years, bringing together more stakeholders including nonprofits, business, philanthropy, universities, health providers, advocates, parent and family organizations, and other government sectors. In 2007, the National Center for Children in Poverty rated Montana’s ECCS plan, recognizing that Montana had formally created a cross sector group, established a public private partnership to work on early childhood issues, and provided for state support of local early childhood systems efforts.⁹

With the assistance of the National Governor’s Association and the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, the Governor’s Office and the Department of Public Health and Human Services followed up on this success by launching a school readiness initiative. The

⁹ National Center for Children in Poverty (2007). *Montana Early Childhood Comprehensive System: The Status of State Early Childhood Comprehensive System (ECCS) Initiative*

initiative involved hosting a statewide summit of educators and stakeholders, forming local school readiness teams, commissioning an economic impact study of early education, and hosting a business summit on the economic benefits of early education. Statewide school readiness summits and the work of local teams continued to raise awareness about the importance of early learning and supported special projects unique to communities such as improving kindergarten transitions, educating parents, and special events to raise awareness about school readiness.

In 2010, Montana received a State Advisory Council grant from the Administration on Children and Families to enhance and expand upon the work of the Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council first established in 1996. This allowed the State to expand the scope of this statewide council from advising only on the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) to a broader focus on the multiple systems impacting young children and families, particularly those with high needs. Renamed the **Best Beginnings Advisory Council**, its goal is to improve collaboration and coordination across the spectrum of governmental and non-profit organizations providing early childhood services, including health and mental health services, family support and parent education, and early care and education. The State used this funding to formalize local school readiness teams formed through the public-private partnership into **Best Beginnings Community Coalitions**, charged with conducting community needs assessments, creating local strategic plans, and implementing projects to improve coordination and address service gaps at the local level. The focus of these coalitions is on systems change and each group includes a diverse membership including parents, early educators, health care providers, Part C providers, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, local government, school districts, and other fields.

Though Montana sponsored earlier efforts at cross-system collaboration, including Governor Councils on Early Childhood and Child Care, these efforts were primarily focused on improving Child Care and Development Fund activities. Best Beginnings, with its State Advisory Council and Community Coalitions and broad systems focus, provides a unique opportunity for Montana to truly embrace systems reform at both the statewide and grass-roots levels. Strengthening this momentum, Montana received a **Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting** (MIECHV) infrastructure development grant of \$3.2 million

focused on systems building at the local level. This funding provided formalized partnerships and resources to support establishing additional Best Beginnings Community Coalitions, particularly in rural and tribal communities. The original seven has now grown to 23 Best Beginnings Community Coalitions located in high needs communities covering one third of the State. Along with engaging local communities, the MIECHV grant has also allowed Montana to build system capacity for delivering evidence-based maternal, infant and early childhood home visiting services to high need families. The State received a MIECHV expansion grant in 2013 that will enable the program to expand to three additional high need communities, including American Indian reservation communities with high percentages of children in poverty, high prevalence of child abuse, poor child health indicators, and low educational achievement – the same high needs communities the Montana Early Learning Challenge will target. The success of the Best Beginnings Community Coalitions has positioned them well to receive other funds for community level projects including funding through the Child and Family Services Division to host family forums to promote family engagement.

Montana's Financial Investment in Early Learning and Enrollment of Children with High Needs

(a) Financial investment, from five years ago to the present, in Early Learning and Development Programs, including the amount of these investments in relation to the size of the State's population of Children with High Needs during this time period.
(b) Increasing, from the previous five years to the present, the number of Children with High Needs participating in Early Learning and Development Programs.

In addition to the collaboration and coordination work of Best Beginnings, Montana is investing in a host of other innovative efforts to improve early childhood development and services, particularly for children with high needs. In 2007, the Montana Legislature provided funding through *Section 20-7-117 MCA* to support **full-day kindergarten** programs in school districts choosing to adopt. Within one year, 94% of kindergarten students were enrolled in full-day rather than half-day programs, enhancing the early education of more than 10,000 students annually. The State has contributed an **increasing level of funding** over the past five years to support full-day kindergarten programs, from \$0 in 2006 to \$28 million in 2013. Since 2009, State funding for full-day kindergarten has increased by 18%. Governor Bullock is now calling for the State to implement a public preschool option to continue this progress.

Healthy Montana Kids began in October 2009 and combines children's Medicaid and CHIP under one umbrella. The result of a statewide referendum endorsed by 70% of the electorate, Healthy Montana Kids utilizes State funds to cover uninsured, low-income children. Prior to 2009, children's Medicaid and CHIP covered less than 70,000 children (under 18) and today it covers more than **100,000 children with high needs, an increase of 43%**. Healthy Montana Kids provides a comprehensive benefits package, under the Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment Program, which covers medically necessary services and coordination of care for children with special health care needs. The State has contributed **increased HMK funding for children under five over the past five years**, from \$954,445 to \$1,304,389.

In 2009, the **Montana State Library** launched **Ready 2 Read**, a research-based initiative educating parents and caregivers about the importance of early literacy development and strategies for nurturing pre-reading skills at home. The initiative provides outreach materials, training opportunities, and special events, free of charge, to improve emerging literacy skills in babies, toddlers and preschoolers. Through Montana's Early Reading First grant, the Office of Public Instruction implemented the Ready 2 Read program with local libraries as a prime kindergarten readiness support. Working with the local library, coaches would arrange time for children to visit the library to engage in Ready 2 Read activities. Since 2009, there has been a 44% increase in children's programs offered at local libraries. Public libraries are located in nearly every community across the State, large and small, and the Montana State Library plays a pivotal role in training local librarians to be early literacy experts.

For many years, Montana has committed State funds beyond the federal minimum to match **Child Care Development Fund** dollars to support **Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships** for families of high needs children. Families receiving scholarships must use licensed, registered or legally certified child care, ensuring that their children receive at least a standardized quality of care. Funds support increasing sliding fee scales and providing market drive reimbursement rates for child care providers.

The **Children's Mental Health Bureau** is expanding the psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTF) waiver which will increase the availability of mental health services for

children. In addition, school-based mental health services such as the Comprehensive School Community Treatment program ensure that students with mental health challenges have the collaborative support to keep them on track for academic and social success. Over the past five years, Montana has contributed an **increasing level of funding** to support children's mental health services offered through these two programs, more than doubling over the past five years from \$427,865 to \$1,012,362. This has allowed the program to serve an **increasing number of children with mental health needs**.

The **Montana Children's Trust Fund**, which supports public awareness efforts to reduce child abuse and neglect, is implementing the Montana PURPLE campaign to address shaken baby syndrome through hospitals and other health care facilities. With broad community outreach, this campaign is reaching a larger audience each year and the State has contributed an **increasing level of funding over the past five years**, from \$77,146 to \$153,819.

The State has committed a portion of **TANF block grant funds** to provide child care subsidies for low income families, support children in the Child and Family Services system, and provide child care for working relative caregivers of children not able to live with their parents. This spending is discretionary and demonstrates Montana's policy commitment to allocating resources in support of young children and their families. TANF spending has **increased over the past five years** from \$8.1 million to \$9.3 million.

The Department of Public Health and Human Services also contributes State funds to match the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant (Montana Children's Health Block Grant) which has increased from \$(b)(5) Services, which increased from funding **increase over the past five years**.

As documented in Table A(1)(4), Montana **has increased its total annual expenditures over the past five years** on early learning and development services from \$99.7 million in 2009 to \$103.1 million in 2013, demonstrating our commitment to high needs children and early learning.

Additional Policies and Practices Supporting the Montana Early Learning Challenge

(c) Existing early learning and development legislation, policies, or practices

State policy makers have supported several initiatives in recent years that lay the foundation for the Montana Early Learning Challenge. Child care quality has been addressed in legislation dating back to 1989, when the Montana Child Care Act was passed to promote the availability and quality of child care. Kindergarten was mandated in 1991 and full-day kindergarten legislation followed in 2007. Since 2010, the State has supported successive legislation to build Best Beginnings and its STARS to Quality Program. *(Please see legislative history timeline on page 24 of the Appendix.)*

Montana was recently granted a **Title IV-E Waiver** that will allow child welfare services to provide more trauma-informed care and assist in the cross-systems integration of early childhood services, screenings, and assessments for children in foster care. In addition to providing a stronger focus on child well-being, this waiver will also allow the State to devote more resources to evidence-based interventions and prevention services to reduce the number of children requiring out-of-home care and better support, family engagement and improved parenting and management skills to allow children to remain in their own homes.

In 2010, Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau launched a statewide effort to engage schools, communities, businesses and families in a focused effort to increase the number of students who graduate. To date, thirty-three communities have joined **Graduation Matters Montana** and 70% of all Montana students attend a school with a Graduation Matters initiative. The effort is designed to provide a seamless transition from pre-school through graduation and the State is on track to cut the drop-out rate in half by 2016. This public-private partnership has generated interest from the philanthropic community, including a three-year grant from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation. To date, more than \$600,000 in private funding has been raised to support this local community work.

Montana's Office of Public Instruction received an **Early Reading First grant** to develop Early Childhood Centers of Excellence that focus on all areas of development, particularly early language and reading skills, for children in high need communities. The State was also one of only six states to receive a **Striving Readers** grant to advance literacy development in children from early childhood through grade 12. Other initiatives at OPI include: the **Early**

Childhood Partnership for Professional Development, providing networking and professional development opportunities for early childhood stakeholders, and; **Indian Education Division**, offering teacher training and culturally appropriate resources so all young children learn about Montana's unique American Indian cultural heritage.

Head Start and Early Head Start play critical roles in serving low-income children in Montana. There are currently 20 Head Start programs and nine Early Head Start programs in the State, ten of which are located in tribal communities. The programs currently serve more than 5,000 children but only 13% of those eligible. Head Start programs in Montana are focused on school readiness, data utilization in program improvement, and family engagement strategies. The Head Start Collaboration Office links programs to create a statewide system, offers consultation and training around effective service practices and meeting Head Start Standards, and influences State and local policy to better support Head Start and other quality early learning programs.

Montana has a strong regional network of Child Care Resource and Referral agencies that work to improve the quality, accessibility, and affordability of child care for all Montana's families. The network provides training and support to providers and initiates projects to build child care supply and quality in urban and rural areas. The mission of the **Montana Child Care Resource and Referral Network** is to provide statewide leadership to build collaboration, strengthen the capabilities of providers, and educate policy makers and other key partners to build a diverse, professional, high quality early care and education system in Montana.

Nearly all newborns in Montana are screened for health impairments and genetic conditions. All newborns identified with a possible condition are referred to medical specialists who provide professional consultation to primary care providers and assist with diagnosis and treatment. The State also supports three **Regional Pediatric Specialty Clinics** that provide medical care for children with special health care needs and hosts interdisciplinary team clinics for a variety of pediatric conditions in multiple locations, including on two Indian reservations. The State's **Part C program** is an early intervention system to help infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities. These services are offered in the child's natural environment using the Routines-Based Early Intervention model. The State also

offers **Best Beginnings scholarships** to help families' access quality child care and **Special Needs Subsidies** to support the higher level of care these children may need. The State has offered a **Medicaid waiver** for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder since 2009. Part C receives guidance on parent engagement and quality services from its **Family Support Services Advisory Council** and also fosters relationships with non-profit organizations, including Parents Lets Unite for Kids (PLUK) and the Rural Institute on Disabilities.

The **Healthy Montana Teen Parent** program supports an early childhood system in Montana for pregnant and parenting teens and their children through high school and community service centers in high needs communities, with a priority focus on supporting American Indian teens. The program provides grants to local centers to facilitate parent self-sufficiency, build parenting capacity, encourage postsecondary education and workforce preparedness, access health care, and improve the healthy development of their infants, toddlers and preschool children.

The **Montana Early Childhood Initiative Funders Group** is a collaboration of four private foundations – Washington Foundation, Edwards Foundation, Kelly Family Foundation Trust and Solid Rock Foundation – and other key stakeholders that have a deep interest in early childhood care and education in Montana. Initially a learning group, the MECI is now launching its first collaborative grant making cycle and is hoping to engage more like-minded funders to strategically award grants to improve the quality and scope of Family, Friend and Neighbor child care serving children in rural areas.

Building Blocks of a High Quality System

(d) Current status in key areas that form the building blocks for a high quality early learning and development system, including Early Learning and Development Standards, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, health promotion practices, family engagement strategies, the development of Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Entry Assessments, and effective data practices

Montana has many of the foundational elements in place to continue to build a coordinated system of early learning and development to better serve young children and their families. Montana has a **Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System**. Through the Department of Public Health and Human Services, the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program (STARS) is a continuous quality improvement program that aligns achievement of quality indicators with support, including workforce development and training opportunities, and

financial incentives for programs increasing the quality of their care in child care and Head Start/Early Head Start Programs. STARS is currently being field tested in 105 child care programs statewide and preliminary findings are strong – over the course of the study, 70% of participating centers have achieved advancement in the system and 16% have achieved a 3-Star rating. *(The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program will be described in detail in Section B and a map identifying the locations of field test participants is found on page 25 of the Appendix.)* In addition to the DPHHS program, Montana’s Office of Public Instruction, through the Board of Public Education, has a Tiered Accreditation System for Public Schools, laying the foundation for a similar framework for public preschool. *(Please see Montana’s Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System on page 30 of the Appendix for a complete description of how the two systems align to create one TQRIS for Montana.)*

The **Early Childhood Project (ECP)** is a multi-faceted career development effort based out of Montana State University focused on expanding opportunities for early educator training and credentialing across the State. ECP has played a pivotal role in developing Montana’s **Core Knowledge and Competency Framework** (The Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base), which is a guide to what practitioners need to know, understand and be able to do to promote positive growth, development and learning in the early years. Montana’s framework is aligned with NAEYC and National Association for Family Child Care accreditation standards, the Head Start Framework and Program Administration and Business Administration Scales used in the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program. ECP has also taken the lead in outlining a **Career Path** framework for early childhood practitioners from entry level through graduate degrees. *(The Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base and Career Path are described in detail in Section D.)* Other efforts of ECP include developing a STARS coaching model and Child Care Development Specialist apprenticeship program.

Montana has had an established set of early learning standards since 2004, when it published the *Early Learning Guidelines for 3-5 year-olds* and added *Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers* in 2008. Both documents were developed through an inclusive process with key stakeholders and input from all corners of the State. For the past two years, State early childhood higher education faculty and other experts have been updating and expanding

this work to incorporate recent brain development research, the impact of ACEs and toxic stress on early development, and other findings from the field. Montana's new comprehensive **Early Learning Standards**, which cover emotional and social, physical, communication, and cognition domains for children birth through age five, will be published in October 2013. *(See Early Learning Standards on page 32 of the Appendix.)*

Montana has adopted the **Pyramid Model** to support the emotional and social development and mental health of young children with high needs across multiple systems. Based on the conceptual framework developed by Vanderbilt University's Center on the Social Emotional Foundation of Early Learning, the model provides evidence-based practices to promote young children's social and emotional competence, prevent emotional disruptions, address challenging behaviors, and understand the impact of nurturing relationships on children's capacity to learn. The Pyramid Model is now integrated into the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program as well as children's mental health and child welfare services and schools across the State, through the Office of Public Instruction's **Montana Behavioral Initiative**.

Montana is highly invested in creating a comprehensive early childhood system that is **trauma-informed**. In 2011, the State collected Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) data and found that approximately 60% of Montana adults reported experiencing at least one ACE and that ACE scores are significantly higher among American Indians, adults with less education and lower incomes, and those with disabilities. When considering the impact of ACEs on long term health, educational achievement, and employment prospects, it is clear that the mitigation of toxic stress during early childhood must be a significant priority. The **National Native Children's Trauma Center**, located at the University of Montana, is providing training across various public systems in trauma-informed interventions for early childhood. The Center is also assisting the State in developing trauma-informed child welfare practices through the Title IV-E waiver. This program not only works preventatively, but also with children currently experiencing trauma. In addition to working with the Center, the Office of Public Instruction has built a model of success in its Schools of Promise (turn around schools) on Indian reservations by developing community-based wraparound services to address students' mental health needs and provided School Trauma and Resiliency training to school staff in these communities.

Montana has a culture of collaboration and **strong State systems** in place that make it well positioned to take on this Early Learning Challenge. State leaders are highly committed to improving system coordination and early learning outcomes. Governor Steve Bullock strongly supports a high-level initiative to unify services and highlight the importance of a coordinated system. A new Governor's Office of Early Childhood is in the planning stages and enterprise architecture for data systems lays the groundwork for strengthening data integrity and sharing data across systems. The Department of Public Health and Human Services has spearheaded several quality improvement initiatives over the past few years, including the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program, and building local capacity and engagement through Best Beginnings Community Coalitions and other efforts.

Superintendent Juneau and the Office of Public Instruction are ready to replicate successful efforts like its Striving Readers and Early Reading First programs by implementing public preschool to improve kindergarten readiness. The Montana State Library has used Ready 2 Read to educate parents and caregivers about the importance of early literacy development and strategies for nurturing pre-reading skills. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education has supported innovative workforce development strategies designed to expand professional development and degree opportunities here in Montana, including the Pathways Project targeting career and education paths for students in secondary through postsecondary education. These Participating State Agencies currently work together effectively on many projects, some of which are detailed above, and they are ready to embrace the creation of a unified state system to improve early learning and development services to better support Montana families.

Table (A)(1)-1: Children from Low-Income¹⁰ families, by age		
	Number of children from Low-Income families in the State	Children from Low-Income families as a percentage of all children in the State
Infants under age 1	5,926	50%
Toddlers ages 1 through 2	11,965	50%
Preschoolers ages 3 to kindergarten entry	12,511	50%
Total number of children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families	36,854	50%
<i>[50% of Montana children under the age of 6 are in families at or below 200% of poverty out of a total of 71,139. In combination with this fact, the total populations as posted above from the July 2012 population estimates are pro-rated by 50% to determine the population by age group that would be at or below the 200% of poverty. Source data is from the Census & Economic Center, of the MT Dept. of Commerce]</i>		

Table (A)(1)-2: Special populations of Children with High Needs		
<i>The State should use these data to guide its thinking about where specific activities may be required to address special populations' unique needs. The State will describe such activities throughout its application.</i>		
Special populations: Children who . . .	Number of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...	Percentage of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...
		Montana Population Data for children 0-5 (2012): 73,902
Have disabilities or developmental delays¹¹	3,512 Children ages 1-5 years with an IFSP/IEP Montana estimate from the 2011/12 National Survey of Children's Health	4.75%
Are English learners¹² In Head Start Programs	73 Head Start, PIR 2013	0.09%

¹⁰ Low-Income is defined as having an income of up to 200% of the Federal poverty rate.

¹¹ For purposes of this application, children with disabilities or developmental delays are defined as children birth through kindergarten entry that have an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

¹² For purposes of this application, children who are English learners are children birth through kindergarten entry who have home languages other than English.

Table (A)(1)-2: Special populations of Children with High Needs

The State should use these data to guide its thinking about where specific activities may be required to address special populations' unique needs. The State will describe such activities throughout its application.

Special populations: Children who . . .	Number of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...	Percentage of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...
		Montana Population Data for children 0-5 (2012): 73,902
Reside on "Indian Lands"	5,873 U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey and 2010 US Census TIGER/Line Shapefile	7.9%
Are migrant¹³	199 CSPR data, 2012)	0.27%
Are homeless¹⁴	10 (HMIS, 2012) 657 (Children served in Head Start and Early Head Start, PIR 2013) 167 (Point-in-Time Survey of Homelessness for 0-4 year olds, 2013)	0.01% 0.89% 0.22%
Are in foster care	1,040 (CAPS, 2013)	1.4%
Other identified by the State:		
1. Receive Medicaid Mental Health Services	1,393 (SFY 2013)	1.89%
2. Reside in rural and frontier counties	19,343	26.17%
3. Receive Services under the Autism Waiver	43 (AWACS, 2013)	0.05%
4. Enrolled in Medicaid./Subset: EPSDT service claim	46,278 / 2,230 (CHIMES, 2013)	62% / 3.0%
5. Enrolled in Healthy Montana Kids (CHIP)/subset EPSDT	11,681 / 806 (CHIMES, 2013)	15.8% / 1.09%

¹³ For purposes of this application, children who are migrant are children birth through kindergarten entry who meet the definition of "migratory child" in ESEA section 1309(2).

¹⁴ The term "homeless children" has the meaning given the term "homeless children and youths" in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (425 U.S.C. 11434a(2)).

Table (A)(1)-2: Special populations of Children with High Needs

The State should use these data to guide its thinking about where specific activities may be required to address special populations' unique needs. The State will describe such activities throughout its application.

Special populations: Children who . . .	Number of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...	Percentage of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...
		Montana Population Data for children 0-5 (2012): 73,902
service claims		
6. Enrolled in SNAP	34,214 (CHIMES, 2013)	46.29%
7. Enrolled in TANF	5,394 (CHIMES, 2013)	7.29%
8. Reside in rural and frontier counties	19,343 (2012 American Community Survey)	26.17%

Data Source Information:

1. *Montana Population Data for children 0-5 (2012): 73,902 is cited from the National Center for Health Statistics. Bridged-race intercensal estimates of the July 1, 1990-July 1, 1999; July 1, 2000-July 1, 2009 Postcensal estimates of the resident population of the United States for July 1, 2010-July 1, 2012 United States resident population by year, county, single-year of age, sex, bridged race, and Hispanic origin, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau with support from the National Cancer Institute. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/dvs/popbridge/popbridge.htm> as of April 24, 2004; Oct 26, 2012; June 13, 2013*
2. *Children indicated who have disabilities or developmental delays, includes the number of children for which he/she has a written intervention plan called an Individualized Family Services plan/IFSP or an Individualized Education Program/IEP. This number includes all Head Start and Early Head Start data (FFY 2013).*
3. *For purposes of this application, children who are English learners are children birth through kindergarten entry who have home languages other than English: PIR data reflects the "Primary Language of Family at Home" for Head Start and Early Head Start children. Among Head Start and Early Head Start Children, there are 73 English Learners, which is 1.6% of all children served.*
4. *The State Automated Child Welfare Information System (CAPS) shows 1,040 children were in foster care ages birth to kindergarten entry.*
5. *Autism Waiver: Montana has only 55 slots, of the 55, 43 are under 5. The waiting list includes 76 children under the age of 5.*
6. *Children's Mental Health Data: SFY 2013 is based on dates of service from claims information. Providers have 365 days to bill for services; claims information for SFY 2013 is incomplete. Based on prior year information, the unduplicated count reported is estimated to be at 98%-99% completion for the year.*
7. *MA, HMK, SNAP, TANF: FY 2013 CHIMES data system and Health Resources Division Claims data*
8. *Number of percent of children who have any developmental problems for which he/she has a written intervention plan called an Individualized Family Services plan/IFSP or an Individualized Education Program/IEP, 2011/12 National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs (<http://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=2513&r=1&r2=28>):*

Table (A)(1)-3: Participation of Children with High Needs in different types of Early Learning and Development Programs, by age

Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program, by age			
	Infants under age 1	Toddlers ages 1 through 2	Preschoolers ages 3 until kindergarten entry	Total
State-funded preschool <i>Specify: N/A</i>	NA	NA	NA	NA
Early Head Start and Head Start¹⁵ <i>Data Source and Year:</i> <i>PIR Cumulative Enrollment, including Tribal Programs, FFY 2013</i>	258	620	4,596	5,472
Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 <i>Data Source and Year:</i> <i>Part C: Annual Fiscal Report, FFY 2011</i> <i>Part B: Section 619, 2013</i>	Part C: 123	Part C: 605	Part B: 1,698	2,426
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA <i>Data Source: CSPP, 2011-2012</i>	NA	NA	965	965
Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program <i>Data Source and Year: CCUBS, SFY 2013, annual unduplicated</i>	388	2,337	3,400	6,125
Other: MIECHV Home Visiting <i>Data Source and Year: MIECHV program, SFY 2013</i>	94	34	9	137
Other: Early Reading First/Striving Readers <i>Data Source and Year: Education Northwest Evaluation 2013</i>	NA	NA	452 Striving Readers 450 Early Reading First	902

¹⁵ Including children participating in Migrant Head Start Programs and Tribal Head Start Programs.

Table (A)(1)-3: Participation of Children with High Needs in different types of Early Learning and Development Programs, by age

Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program, by age			
	Infants under age 1	Toddlers ages 1 through 2	Preschoolers ages 3 until kindergarten entry	Total

Montana does not currently have a public funded preschool option, outside of preschool funded with special education dollars.

The data for the Maternal and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program represents the first year of program enrollment and participation for most sites. The program enrolls women during pregnancy and young children. Although most child participants are under age 2, programs may serve children through kindergarten entry.

CCDF data in table (A)(1)-3 is from CCUBS, SFY 2013, annual unduplicated. CCDF Data in table (A)(1)-5 is in regards to programs receiving CCDF funds (average monthly served.) This is from the Child Care Payment System (CCUBS) as posted to the Child Care Managerial reports for each SFY end.

Table (A)(1)-3b: Participation of Children in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State, by Race/Ethnicity

Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of Hispanic children	Number of Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Asian Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Black or African American Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Children of Two or more races	Number of Non-Hispanic White Children
State-funded preschool	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Early Head Start and Head Start ¹⁶	282	1,961	20	45	9	387	2,777
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part C	24	124	3	4	0	29	544

¹⁶ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Table (A)(1)-3b: Participation of Children in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State, by Race/Ethnicity

Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of Hispanic children	Number of Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Asian Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Black or African American Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Children	Number of Non-Hispanic Children of Two or more races	Number of Non-Hispanic White Children
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	39	232	10	5	3	20	656
Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program	234	592	14	91	11	144	3,539
Other: MIECHV	8	18	1	1	0	0	109
[CCDF data is the Race and Latino Ethnicity of Children from the Child Profile of the Montana ACF 801 data report for May 2013. Not included in the CCDF line is the Race not reported (non Latino of 30, and Ethnicity not reported of a total of 55. That is a total of 83 children out of 4,710 not reported on the CCDF line above.]							

Table (A)(1)-4: Historical data on funding for Early Learning and Development					
Type of investment	Funding for each of the Past 5 Fiscal Years				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Supplemental State spending on Early Head Start and Head Start [1] <i>Source: DPHHS</i>	(b)(5)				
State-funded preschool <i>Specify:</i>					
State contributions to IDEA Part C <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
State contributions for special education and related services for children with disabilities, ages 3 through kindergarten entry					
Total State contributions to CCDF <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
State match to CCDF [2]					
(b)(5)					
TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs [3] <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: TANF MOE General Fund <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: Full-time Kindergarten <i>Source: OPI</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: Healthy Montana Kids [4] <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: Private Funding No Kid Hungry [5] <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: Children's Trust Fund Purple Project [6] <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					

Table (A)(1)-4: Historical data on funding for Early Learning and Development					
Type of investment	Funding for each of the Past 5 Fiscal Years				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Other State contributions Specify: Children’s Mental Health MA Match [7] <i>Source: DPHHS</i>	(b)(5)				
Other State contributions Specify: Comprehensive School and Community Treatment (CSCT) Match <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: Health Enhancement <i>Source: OPI</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: Public Health Home Visiting <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: MIAMI [8] <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: Genetics [9] <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: Children’s Special Health Services <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: Newborn Screening <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: WIC Farmers’ Market Support [10] <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: Maternal Child Health Block Grant <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					
Other State contributions Specify: Media Campaign – Tobacco Prevention Targeting Pregnant Women <i>Source: DPHHS</i>					

Table (A)(1)-4: Historical data on funding for Early Learning and Development					
Type of investment	Funding for each of the Past 5 Fiscal Years				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Other State contributions Specify: Tobacco Quit Line [11] Source: DPHHS	(b)(5)				
Other State contributions Specify: Montana Asthma Home Visiting Project [12] Source: DPHHS					
Other State contributions Specify: ECE Courses at Montana State University – Billings Source: OCHE					
Other State contributions Specify: ECE Courses at Flathead Valley Community College Source: OCHE					
Other State contributions Specify: ECE Courses at the University of Montana-Western Source: OCHE					
Other State contributions Specify: ECE Courses at Montana State University – Bozeman [13] Source: OCHE					
Other State Contributions Specify: ECP Registry Funds					
Total State contributions: [14]					
(b)(5)					

Table (A)(1)-4: Historical data on funding for Early Learning and Development

Type of investment	Funding for each of the Past 5 Fiscal Years				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<i>[5] No Kid Hungry: First Funded in 2012</i>					
(b)(5)					
<i>[8] MIAMI: Montana Initiative for the Abatement of Mortality in Infants. A program under Public Health Home Visiting aimed at high-risk pregnant women and children up to one year of age. Includes both General Fund and State Special Revenue Funds.</i>					
<i>[9] Genetics: Provides specialized services for newly diagnosed children with metabolic and genetic conditions.</i>					
<i>[10] WIC Farmer's Market: Provides pregnant women and children 0-5 with the opportunity to purchase fresh, locally-grown fruits and vegetables directly from authorized Montana Farmers. Funds were reduced in FY12-FY13 because of the level of reportable expenditures from counties.</i>					
<i>[11] Tobacco Quit Line: Funds related to calls from pregnant women for help quitting smoking. The calculation is based on data indicating the number of pregnant callers and using an average cost per participant to get the total cost per year.</i>					
<i>[12] Montana Asthma Home Visiting Program (MAP): trains public health nurses to empower families of children with uncontrolled asthma with the knowledge and tools they need to manage the disease. This is especially critical in our rural areas because of the long distances children and families are often required to travel to receive medical care.</i>					
<i>[13] 2011 was an induction year for the MSU-Bozeman campus, so only federal funding was used for ECE Courses</i>					
<i>[14] Overall Funding Note: The Montana Legislature meets only once every two years and approves a biennial budget. Because of this structure, state funding is slower to respond to national economic forces such as the recession which began in 2007. It is important to note that, even despite this factor, overall spending on early childhood education and development programs has increased by \$3.4 million over the past five years.</i>					

Table (A)(1)-5: Historical data on the participation of Children with High Needs in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State

Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Total number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program for each of the past 5 years ¹⁷				
	2009	2010	2011 ¹⁸	2012 ¹⁷	2013 ¹⁷
State-funded preschool <i>(annual census count; October 1)</i>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Early Head Start and Head Start¹⁹ <i>(funded enrollment) PIR data</i>	(b)(5)				
Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 <i>Part B: annual December 1 count</i> <i>Part C Annual Performance Report FFY 2011</i>	Part C: 731 Part B: 1,871	Part C: 649 Part B: 2,205	Part C: 723 Part B: 2,474	Part C: 728 Part B: 2,646	Part C: 886 Part B: 2,565
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA <i>Total number of children who receive Title I services annually, as reported in the Consolidated State Performance Report</i>	616	759	1,024	965	995
Programs receiving CCDF funds <i>(average monthly served)</i>	5,324	5,896	5,850	5,446	4,619
Other: MIECHV Program began implementation in 2011 <i>Annual Program Report 2013</i>	NA	NA	NA	NA	137
Other: Early Reading First <i>Education Northwest Evaluation 2013</i>	335	400	460	480	450
Other: Striving Readers Program began operation in 2011 <i>Education Northwest Evaluation 2013</i>	NA	NA	475	483	452
<i>Montana does not currently have a public funded preschool option, outside of preschool funded with special education dollars.</i>					
<i>Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619: figure for Part C is</i>					

¹⁷ Include all Children with High Needs served with both Federal dollars and State supplemental dollars.

¹⁸ Note to Reviewers: The number of children served reflects a mix of Federal, State, and local spending. Head Start, IDEA, and CCDF all received additional Federal funding under the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which may be reflected in increased numbers of children served in 2009-2011.

¹⁹ Including children participating in Migrant Head Start Programs and Tribal Head Start Programs.

Table (A)(1)-5: Historical data on the participation of Children with High Needs in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State

Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Total number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program for each of the past 5 years ¹⁷				
	2009	2010	2011 ¹⁸	2012 ¹⁷	2013 ¹⁷

through 9/24/13

The 2013 figure for Programs funded under Title I of ESEA is estimated, based on an approximate projection for October 2013.

Head Start/Early Head Start PIR data for 2013 is relevant to the 2012-2013 school year. Total number of children with high needs funded in Head Start is reflective of total ACF federal funding enrollment over the past 5 years. Total Cumulative Enrollment, as indicated in Table (A)(1)-3, is reflective of turnover within a federally funded slot.

Programs receiving CCDF funds (average monthly served) data is from the Child Care Payment System (CCUBS) as posted to the Child Care Managerial reports for each SFY end. CCDF data in table (A)(1)-3 is from CCUBS, SFY 2013, annual unduplicated.

***The number of children with High Needs participating in CCDF, SFY 2013, is reflective of a recent decline in birth rates for Montana, coupled with a three-year delay in updating the Federal Poverty Index impacting eligibility criteria and Market Rate impacting payments to child care providers. Effective July 1, 2013, the FPL was raised. Additionally, effective January 1, 2012, Montana increased its requirements for the Legally Certified Provider Program (Family, Friends, and Neighbor Care) in the interest of safety for children, so that all adults in the household were required to complete a comprehensive background check. In addition, if an adult in the home had a drug related conviction, the LCP home is no longer eligible for CCDF funds. This reduced the number of LCP's and the number of families choosing to use the subsidy funds for child care. Montana also utilized ARRA funds to reduce copayment requirements by 29%, meaning parents copayments were less, this contributed to an increase from 2009 to 2010.*

Early Reading First ended with 4th year No Cost Extension on September 30, 2013. One site did not participate in the 4th year, resulting in a decrease in numbers for the project. However, the site continues to serve children at a similar enrollment

Striving Readers: The MSRP (Striving Readers) was not in effect in 2009 and 2010

Table (A)(1)-6 : Current status of the State’s Early Learning and Development Standards

Please place an “X” in the boxes to indicate where the State’s Early Learning and Development Standards address the different age groups by Essential Domain of School Readiness

Essential Domains of School Readiness	Age Groups		
	Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers
Language and literacy development	X	X	X
Cognition and general knowledge (including early math and early scientific development)	X	X	X
Approaches toward learning	X	X	X
Physical well-being and motor development	X	X	X
Social and emotional development	X	X	X

Table (A)(1)-7: Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System currently required within the State

Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where an element of a Comprehensive Assessment System is currently required.

Types of programs or systems	Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System				
	Screening Measures	Formative Assessments	Measures of Environmental Quality	Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions	Other
State-funded preschool <i>Specify: N/A</i>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Early Head Start and Head Start²⁰ *Federal requirements of all HS/EHS in the state	X Grantee must perform or obtain developmental screening, but is program choice	X Grantee choice of comprehensive assessment measures aligned with Head Start Child Development & Early Learning Framework	X In Performance Standards Many use ECERS/CLASS	X In Performance standards CLASS	X Many use ChildPlus and Teaching Strategies Gold
Programs funded under IDEA Part C	X Child Find				X Quality Assurance Monitoring annually
Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619	X Child Find				
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA <i>Specify: n/a</i>					
Programs receiving CCDF funds			X Health and safety, general environmental quality with health and safety standards		X Licensing standards

²⁰ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Table (A)(1)-7: Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System currently required within the State

Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where an element of a Comprehensive Assessment System is currently required.

Types of programs or systems	Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System				
	Screening Measures	Formative Assessments	Measures of Environmental Quality	Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions	Other
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements <i>Specify by tier (add rows if needed):</i>	Star 5 incorporates NAEYC accreditation, screening is included	Star 5 incorporates NAEYC accreditation, screening is included	Star 2-5 ERS	ERS subscale	X PAS/BAS and other STAR level monitoring
State licensing requirements			X Health and safety, general environmental quality with health and safety standards		X Licensing criteria health and safety
Other: Home Visiting	Ages and Stages Questionnaire 3 (ASQ-3™) and Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional (ASQ:SE)		Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment	ASQ-3™ and ASQ: SE	
Other: Striving Readers	iStation's iSip	iStation's iSip		iWalkthrough	

Table (A)(1)-7: Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System currently required within the State

Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where an element of a Comprehensive Assessment System is currently required.

Types of programs or systems	Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System				
	Screening Measures	Formative Assessments	Measures of Environmental Quality	Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions	Other
Other: Project REAL	Ages and Stages Questionnaire 3 ASQ-3™ Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional ASQ: SE Early Learning Screening (ELS) DECA	IGDI (get Ready to Read) Peabody Picture Vocabulary (PPVT) Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL) Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ)	ELLCO	CLASS	
Other: Early Reading First	PALS IGDI	PALS IGDI Peabody Picture Vocabulary (PPVT) Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL)	CLASS ELLCO	CLASS ELLCO	
<i>[Edit the labels on the above rows as needed, and enter text here to clarify or explain any of the data, if necessary.]</i>					

Table (A)(1)-8: Elements of high-quality health promotion practices currently required within the State

Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where the elements of high-quality health promotion practices are currently required.

Types of Programs or Systems	Elements of high-quality health promotion practices				
	Health and safety requirements	Developmental, behavioral, and sensory screening, referral, and follow-up	Health promotion, including physical activity and healthy eating habits	Health literacy	Other
State-funded preschool <i>Specify: N/A</i>	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Early Head Start and Head Start	X	X	X	X	
Programs funded under IDEA Part C		X Child Find and Part C providers screening, assessment, referral, and follow up			
Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619		X Preschool screening			
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA (N/A)					
Programs receiving CCDF funds	X		X Require meals to meet USDA guidelines and national research council	X Limited, communicable diseases	

Table (A)(1)-8: Elements of high-quality health promotion practices currently required within the State

Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where the elements of high-quality health promotion practices are currently required.

Types of Programs or Systems	Elements of high-quality health promotion practices				
	Health and safety requirements	Developmental, behavioral, and sensory screening, referral, and follow-up	Health promotion, including physical activity and healthy eating habits	Health literacy	Other
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements <i>Specify by tier</i>	X Stars 1-5		X Stars 1-5	X Stars 1-5	
State licensing requirements	X		X Require meals to meet USDA guidelines and national research council	X limited, communicable diseases	
Other: MIECHV Home Visiting		X	X	X	
Striving Readers/Early Reading First	X Head Start Centers only	X Head Start Centers only	X Head Start Centers only	X Head Start Centers only	
Project REAL		X ASQ-3™, BASC-Parental Survey, DIAL 4			
WIC	X		X	X Limited to referrals for routine health care and needed follow up	X Breastfeeding promotion and support, peer counseling, age appropriate supplemental food package, co-located with local public health departments.
Nutrition and			X		

Table (A)(1)-8: Elements of high-quality health promotion practices currently required within the State					
<i>Please place an "X" in the boxes to indicate where the elements of high-quality health promotion practices are currently required.</i>					
Types of Programs or Systems	Elements of high-quality health promotion practices				
	Health and safety requirements	Developmental, behavioral, and sensory screening, referral, and follow-up	Health promotion, including physical activity and healthy eating habits	Health literacy	Other
Physical Activity Program (NAPA)			Public Awareness and Nutrition Standards in ECE and Head Start		
No Kid Hungry			X		
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CFR language)	X		X All meals meet USDA CACFP nutrition guidelines in 7 CFR 226.20. Same guidelines apply to Head Start and CCFD programs.		

Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State	
<i>Please describe the types of high-quality family engagement strategies required in the State. Types of strategies may, for example, include parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development.</i>	
Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
State-funded preschool	N/A: Montana does not currently have a public funded preschool option, outside of preschool funded with special education dollars.
Early Head Start and Head Start	No current state requirements, but HS/EHS must abide by federal requirements. Strategies used include the Family Community Engagement Framework and the Making It Work! Framework.
Programs funded under IDEA Part C	IFSP development and ongoing child and family outcomes assessment, parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent

Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State

Please describe the types of high-quality family engagement strategies required in the State. Types of strategies may, for example, include parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development.

Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
	education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, transitional support for families as children move to preschool or other community settings, social networks of support, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development. Family Support State Advisory Council: the inter-agency advisory council with required parent participation regionally.
Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619	No current requirements, but IDEA Part B must abide by federal requirements: <i>include parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making.</i>
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	No current requirements, but Title I must abide by federal requirements: <i>include parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten outreach to fathers and other family members, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making.</i>
Programs receiving CCDF funds	Same as state licensing requirements
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements <i>Specify by tier:</i> <i>Excerpts taken from center criteria, similar criteria in place for family/group child care</i>	Star 1: state licensing requirements Star 2: Enrollment Process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A written enrollment process is in place that facilitates an exchange of information between the program and parents, which works to assure strong partnerships. This process should include the following: description of the program and policies; family culture; and wishes around topics such as eating, sleeping, toileting, and discipline. Child Care Contract: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program has a signed child care contract with each family. Topics in the contract will include, along with any required licensing policies, at least the following: hours, fees, payment policy, schedule, vacation, program closure, ill child and absence policy, responsibility for alternate care, and termination policy. Star 3: Community Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program provides families with information regarding community resources. Examples of community resources may include: Child Care

Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State

Please describe the types of high-quality family engagement strategies required in the State. Types of strategies may, for example, include parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development.

Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
	<p>Resource & Referral Agencies, public library, city recreation department, housing authority, parent resource center, public health clinic, hospital, public schools, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Office of Public Assistance, county health department, family support agency, early intervention organizations such as: Hi-Line Home Programs, Inc., Developmental Educational Assistance Program (DEAP), Quality Life Concepts (QLC), Support & Techniques for Empowering People (STEP), Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), Family Outreach, Child Development Center (CDC).</p> <p>Transitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program supports children and families while transitioning children into child care and out of child care into another educational setting. <p>Family Involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program provides families with multiple opportunities for involvement such as: open house, opportunities to volunteer, social events, potluck meals, parent/family surveys, parent resource center, etc. <p>Star 4: Conferences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program offers, in addition to ongoing conversations, a meeting/conference with each child's family at least once per year. Together, the child's progress and needs are reviewed, and goals for the child are set. <p>Home/School Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities are available to facilitate exchange of information between the program and families, such as home/school journals or notebooks, bulletin boards, newsletters, parent advisory councils, parent volunteers, parent participation, etc. <p>Star 5: NAEYC Accredited (Centers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Head Start/Head Start Performance Standards (Head Start Programs)
State licensing requirements (child care licensing)	<p>ARM 37.95.115 (1) requires the following information to be made available to the parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a typical daily schedule of activities • admission requirements, enrollment procedures, hours of operation • frequency and type of meals and snacks served • fees and payment plan • regulations regarding sick children • transportation and trip arrangements

Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State

Please describe the types of high-quality family engagement strategies required in the State. Types of strategies may, for example, include parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development.

Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●discipline policies ●department day care licensing requirements <p>(3) of this same rule requires: “The licensee or registrant shall allow custodial and non-custodial parental access as well as access by legal guardians to the facility at any time during which child day care services are provided, unless there is a current court order preventing parent-child contact.”</p>
Other: Autism Waiver	Autism Waiver: IFSP development and ongoing child and family outcomes assessment.
Other: Home visiting	Parent access to program and participation in visits; ongoing two-way communication with families and family goal-setting, parent education in child development, group connections between parents in the community, linkages with community supports and programs.
Other: Best Beginnings Community Coalitions	Locally driven plans for family engagement through focused family forums, Parent education and support, parent involvement in decision-making
Other: CPS Waiver	Parent access to program and participation in visits, parent and family involvement in decision-making and family group decision-making meetings; ongoing communication with families and family goal setting, outreach to fathers and other family members, parent education in child development, linkages with community supports and program.

Table (A)(1)-10: Status of all early learning and development workforce credentials²¹ currently available in the State

List the early learning and development workforce credentials in the State	If State has a workforce knowledge and competency framework, is the credential aligned to it? (Yes/No/Not Available)	Number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who have the credential		Notes (if needed)
		#	%	
Infant Toddler Caregiver Education Certification	Yes	583	9.48%	From State of Montana for period 4/5/2005 – 9/30/2013 I/T started in 1999
Preschool Teacher Education Certification	Yes	280	4.55%	From State of Montana for period 1/1/2011- 9/20/2013 PS started in 2011
Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship	Yes	9	0.14%	From State of Montana for period October 1, 2012- present
Child Development Associate (CDA)	Yes	122	1.98%	9/30/10- 10/1/13
<p><i>Percentages were calculated from the total number of early childhood educators from Head Start PIR data (2013), as well as the number of early childhood educators in the Child Care Under the Big Sky (CCUBS) data management system.</i></p> <p><i>CDA figure, 122, is for all new CDA's. Eighty-five renewed within the same time span.</i></p> <p><i>Denominator used in calculations is 6152, which is the total number of participants on the ECP Registry.</i></p>				

²¹ Includes both credentials awarded and degrees attained.

Table (A)(1)-11: Summary of current postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in the State that issue credentials or degrees to Early Childhood Educators

List postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in the State that issue credentials or degrees to Early Childhood Educators	Number of Early Childhood Educators that received an early learning credential or degree from this entity in the previous year	Does the entity align its programs with the State's current Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and progression of credentials? <i>(Yes/No/ Not Available)</i>
Early Childhood Services Bureau/DPHHS	CCDS: 9 I/T:79 PS:97 TOTAL: 185	Yes
UM Western	30 credit certificate:3 AAS:26 BS:11 EC Minor: 3 TOTAL: 40	Yes
MSU Bozeman	BS:4 Minor:5 TOTAL: 9	Yes
Salish Kootenai College	AAS1:1 TOTAL: 1	Yes
Dawson Community College	AAS:4 TOTAL: 4	Yes
Flathead Valley Community College	AAS: 5 TOTAL: 5	Yes
June1, 2011-May 31, 2012 for all ECE higher education data reported to the Early Childhood Project for annual Wall of Honor:		
Special Permissive EC competency	EC Minor total: 8	Yes
Credit EC Certificate 3	30	Yes
AAS (associate degree	36	Yes
Bachelor Degrees	15	Yes

Table (A)(1)-12: Current status of the State's Kindergarten Entry Assessment					
State's Kindergarten Entry Assessment	Essential Domains of School Readiness				
	Language and literacy	Cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development)	Approaches toward learning	Physical well-being and motor development	Social and emotional development
Montana does not currently have a statewide KEA, so this table does not apply.					
Domain covered? (Y/N)					
Domain aligned to Early Learning and Development Standards? (Y/N)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Instrument(s) used? (Specify)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Evidence of validity and reliability? (Y/N)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Evidence of validity for English learners? (Y/N)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Evidence of validity for children with disabilities? (Y/N)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
How broadly administered? (If not administered statewide, include date for reaching statewide administration)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Results included in Statewide Longitudinal Data System? (Y/N)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table (A)(1)-13: Profile of all early learning and development data systems currently used in the State							
List each data system currently in use in the State that includes early learning and development data	Essential Data Elements						
	<i>Place an "X" for each Essential Data Element (refer to the definition) included in each of the State's data systems</i>						
	Unique child identifier	Unique Early Childhood Educator identifier	Unique program site identifier	Child and family demographic information	Early Childhood Educator demographic information	Data on program structure and quality	Child-level program participation and attendance
AIM	X						
MSEIS			X				

Table (A)(1)-13: Profile of all early learning and development data systems currently used in the State

List each data system currently in use in the State that includes early learning and development data	Essential Data Elements						
	Place an "X" for each Essential Data Element (refer to the definition) included in each of the State's data systems						
	Unique child identifier	Unique Early Childhood Educator identifier	Unique program site identifier	Child and family demographic information	Early Childhood Educator demographic information	Data on program structure and quality	Child-level program participation and attendance
GEMS			X	X			X
Practitioner Registry (PD and QRIS)		X			X	X	
Head Start/Early Head Start PIR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Home Visiting	X			X			X
CCUBS	X	X	X	X		X	X
CAPS	X		X	X			X
CHIMES/MMIS HMK, SNAP, TANF	X			X			X
Immunizations Registry IMMTREX	X		X	X			
WIC	X		X				

Office of Public Instruction Data Systems:

Achievement in Montana (AIM) - Statewide Student Identifier: A nine-digit number that is assigned by the AIM system at the state level at the time that a student is first enrolled in a public school or an accredited non-public school. The identifier is a unique identifier for one and only one student.

Montana State Educator Information System (MSEIS) – School Employee Identifier: A six-digit unique identifier for each school employee for state reporting purposes. SEIDs are assigned by the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) based on a request for an SEID number by a school district, special education cooperative, or accredited non-public school.

GEMS is Montana's Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System: This data reporting system provides access to multiple years of data and interactive reports on student achievement, graduation rates, enrollment, program and course offerings, district and school profiles, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), and financial information reported by school districts. Additionally, GEMS provides users the ability to compare Montana schools side-by-side.

Department of Public Health and Human Services:

The Montana Early Childhood Project (ECP) houses the Practitioner Registry. The purpose of the registry is to increase the number of high quality early care and education programs by helping to develop and track a knowledgeable and skilled early childhood workforce, they are based upon an

Table (A)(1)-13: Profile of all early learning and development data systems currently used in the State

List each data system currently in use in the State that includes early learning and development data	Essential Data Elements						
	Place an "X" for each Essential Data Element (refer to the definition) included in each of the State's data systems						
	Unique child identifier	Unique Early Childhood Educator identifier	Unique program site identifier	Child and family demographic information	Early Childhood Educator demographic information	Data on program structure and quality	Child-level program participation and attendance
<p>individuals verified professional achievements. The Registry provides important data about the early childhood workforce to help raise the status and compensation for early care and education as a viable and unique profession in our society.</p> <p><u>The Office of Head Start Program Information Report (PIR)</u>: provides comprehensive data on the services, staff, children, and families served by Head Start and Early Head Start programs nationwide. All grantees and delegates are required to submit Program Information Reports for Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The PIR is an important source of descriptive and service data for the Head Start community, their partners, Congress, and for the general public. The PIR data is compiled for use at the federal, regional, state, and local levels (http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/mr/pir)</p> <p><u>MIECHV data</u> is now being collected through their Maternal and Early Childhood Home Visiting data base called MTmechv, which stands for Montana Maternal and Early Childhood Home Visiting.</p> <p><u>Child Care Under the Big Sky (CCUBS)</u>: is a comprehensive childcare system that integrates all the functions required to provide subsidized childcare to qualified families in Montana. It provides childcare eligibility and licensing functions, plus automated contracts management. CCUBS records, maintains, and reports on fundamental information common to most state-subsidized childcare programs. Key functions include: client intake, eligibility determination, authorization of care, case management, provider management, financial management (including invoicing, recoupment of overpayments, and related financial transactions), notifications and reports, worker management, and administrative and federal reporting. CCUBS also includes a complete childcare provider licensing module which includes complaints, investigations, and contract management. The licensing module also includes a mobile licensing checklist on tablet computers. This allows licensing personnel to update records in the field and then sync them with the CCUBS system when in the office.</p> <p><u>CAPS</u>: The Child and Family Services Division of DPHHS relies on the Child and Adult Protective Services (CAPS) for data collection. CAPS is the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) used for federal child welfare data reporting to the Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. Due to its age, the CAPS system is due to be replaced, with funding for the updated SACWIS system anticipated to be included in the 2015 legislative session state budget. As CAPS is a COBOL system, it does not interface well with modern enterprise architecture. However, CAPS data is able to be extracted and analyzed outside of the CAPS system. CFSD uses several methodologies to extract data to measure safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system in Montana. As CFSD prepares an RFP for a new SACWIS system, the ability for this system to share data with other state agencies and divisions will be a central requirement.</p> <p><u>Combined Healthcare Information and Montana Eligibility System (CHIMES)</u> includes: Chimes-EA (Enterprise Architecture) - TANF, SNAP, and Medicaid CHIMES, all programs of the Human and Community Services. Function: Eligibility determination, benefit distribution, program administration, tracking, and reporting</p>							

Table (A)(1)-13: Profile of all early learning and development data systems currently used in the State

List each data system currently in use in the State that includes early learning and development data	Essential Data Elements						
	Place an "X" for each Essential Data Element (refer to the definition) included in each of the State's data systems						
	Unique child identifier	Unique Early Childhood Educator identifier	Unique program site identifier	Child and family demographic information	Early Childhood Educator demographic information	Data on program structure and quality	Child-level program participation and attendance
<p><u>Immunizations Registry, imMTrax:</u> Montana's Immunization Information System (IIS), imMTrax, is a confidential, computerized, population-based system that collects and consolidates vaccination data from vaccine providers and provides tools for designing and sustaining effective immunization strategies at the provider and program levels. Among the capabilities of imMTrax are the capacity to inform vaccine providers of upcoming patient vaccination needs; generate vaccination coverage reports, patient reminders, or recalls for past due vaccinations; and interface with electronic health record (EHR) systems.</p> <p><u>Women, Infants, and Children food and nutrition service (WIC):</u> WIC M-SPIRIT is a program of Public Health and Safety. Function: The SPIRIT system ensures services are provided, tracked and reported in all WIC Clinics across the state and that federal WIC requirements are met;</p> <p><i>*As a State, Montana continues to invest in new agency and division IT systems that possess the ability to share data easily. As systems are replaced in the various state agencies, divisions, and bureaus collaborating toward the goals of the grant, all new modern IT systems will be built using Systems Oriented Enterprise Architecture (SOA). Within the time of this grant, reported by the State CIO, although not a specific goal of the grant, the various state agencies that comprise Montana's early learning system will all run on SOA and will begin to develop the ability to have all of the essential data elements built in; enable uniform data collection and easy entry of the essential data elements by participating state agencies and participating programs; facilitates the exchange of data among participating state agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as common education data standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data; and generate information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for early learning and development programs and early childhood educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making and to share with parents and other community stakeholders.</i></p>							

(A)(2) Articulating the State’s rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals. (20 points)

The extent to which the State clearly articulates a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable, builds on the State’s progress to date (as demonstrated in selection criterion (A)(1)), is likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs, and includes—

(a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the educational gaps between Children with High Needs and their peers;

(b) An overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates how the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving these goals; and

(c) A specific rationale that justifies the State’s choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals.

Rationale for Montana’s Reform Agenda

In Montana, we have a vision of an early childhood system that supports children ages 0-8 and their families, including prenatal care. Every Montana parent shall have access to a safe, high quality early childhood education for their child that includes developmentally appropriate curriculum, knowledgeable and well-trained program staff and educators, comprehensive services that support their health, nutrition, and social well-being, in an environment that respects and supports diversity. Young children that are supported are more likely to be prepared for success in K-12 and beyond. This vision, combined with results from the Best Beginnings Advisory Council’s Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan, form the foundation for Montana’s High Quality Plan.

A statewide needs assessment was conducted in 2013 by the Best Beginnings Advisory Council that speaks to the importance of systems coordination and service enhancements in achieving better outcomes for young children. In addition to highlighting strengths of Montana’s current systems in *Section A.1.*, needs assessment findings include:

High Level/Cross System Needs
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Challenges coordinating and collaborating across and within early childhood systems2. Access challenges for families and children to receive the supports they need3. Limited outreach/education for stakeholders to understand importance of early childhood
Family/Community Support Needs
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Increasing cost of housing, insufficient housing supports2. Transportation challenges, particularly in rural areas3. Rising food insecurity; increased demand on emergency food supports4. Difficult access to human services; no “one stop shop”, duplicate application process

5. Insufficient parent education opportunities; lack of coordination
6. Increasing numbers of children in foster care
Social, Emotional, Mental Health Needs
1. Lack of understanding about importance of healthy social and emotional development
2. Service access challenges, particularly in rural areas
3. Insufficient crisis and sub-crisis services
4. Limited evidence-based and outcome-based approaches
5. Lack of medication monitoring
Connection to Medical Insurance/Medical Home
1. Adults struggle to access insurance
2. Insufficient primary health care providers, particularly in rural areas
3. More children could benefit from medical homes
Early Childhood Programs/Education
1. Higher quality and licensing standards needed for child care facilities
2. Insufficient child care providers, particularly for infants and children with high needs
3. Cost of child care is too high for many families
4. Best Beginnings subsidies are challenging to access and lack stability
5. Best Beginnings reimbursement rates are too low
6. Child Care Resource and Referral agencies have too many responsibilities
7. Child care provider training requirements in licensing are too low

In reflecting on these needs, the Advisory Council developed a set of **recommendations**; those listed below present a compelling rationale for Montana’s Early Learning Challenge:

- Move Best Beginnings State Advisory Council to Governor’s Office
- Require use of evidence-based practices
- Coordinate work across state agencies and organizations
- Increase data sharing and coordination with Tribal entities
- Coordinate and support Best Beginnings Community Coalitions
- Train child care providers to understand/address social, emotional, behavioral issues
- Create and implement a common screening/assessment infrastructure
- Coordinate policies of work support programs to align with Medicaid
- Educate community about quality child care
- Increase child care licensing standards
- Increase access to educational supports for families
- Increase professional development opportunities
- Expand capacity of Best Beginnings STARS to Quality program

Overview of Montana's High Quality Early Learning Plan

(b) An overall summary of the State Plan that clearly articulates how the High-Quality Plans proposed under each selection criterion, when taken together, constitute an effective reform agenda that establishes a clear and credible path toward achieving these goals

The recommendation of the Best Beginnings Advisory Council combined with identified strategies through the Office of Public Instruction heavily influenced the **reform agenda** outlined in Montana's High Quality Early Learning Plan:

- ✓ Create a **new cross-system coordination model** that enables services to be focused on the needs of the child and family, regardless of the organization or State Agency administering the program or providing the resources
- ✓ Establish a **Governor's Office of Early Childhood** to elevate the importance of this effort and manage the cross system collaboration it will require
- ✓ Implement a **public preschool model**, beginning first in high needs communities, that can be scaled up to serve children across the state
- ✓ Implement a **statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System** across the spectrum of early learning and development programs through the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program for child care and Head Start/Early Head Start programs and public preschool accreditation through the Board of Public Education and OPI.
- ✓ Ensure Montana's **Early Learning Standards** inform curriculum and program practices
- ✓ **Increase access** to high quality early learning programs **for high needs children**, including those who are low income, have disabilities or developmental delays, and are ethnically diverse or live on tribal lands
- ✓ Create a **Kindergarten Entry Assessment** protocol that improves child transitions and provides kindergarten teachers with the information they need to tailor instruction
- ✓ Utilize **universal screening tools** across multiple systems to aid in service planning and increased early identification strategies
- ✓ **Engage parents, caregivers and community members** in local efforts to improve early learning quality and access through coalitions, marketing and family-centered practice
- ✓ Enhance and align effective **workforce development strategies** to improve early educator preparation across all types of early learning programs

- ✓ Improve access to **degree programs and credentialing opportunities** for educators in rural areas and on tribal lands
- ✓ Implement strategies to **promote retention** of highly qualified early educators
- ✓ **Increase cultural and linguistic relevancy** in communities and programs
- ✓ Increase child care **licensing standards** and monitoring of early learning programs
- ✓ Integrate **trauma-informed** practices and increase focus on healthy **social and emotional development**
- ✓ Improve **data systems and alignment** to improve planning and evaluation efforts and reduce the burden on families
- ✓ **Increase public knowledge** about the importance of quality early learning and development to strengthen public will and increase resources

This reform agenda articulates the work to be accomplished through this Early Learning Challenge over the next four years and the initiatives to be implemented across and between systems to improve school readiness for all children, particularly those with high needs.

For Montana’s Early Learning Challenge, 44 counties have been selected as high needs in accord with Table (A)(1)(2) and other factors. *(Please see page 26 and 27 of the Appendix for a map and chart depicting the high needs counties selected.)* In determining phased implementation of several of the initiatives within Montana’s plan, it was important to match high needs communities with the capacity to provide services. The intention is to build on existing infrastructures to increase services, while identifying how services can be provided statewide and in communities where services are sparse. Criteria used to identify these target communities include:

- Striving Readers/Early Reading First communities, as eligibility was based on criteria demonstrating high needs (free/reduced lunch, graduation rates, low income students not meeting AYP in reading, Title I, or more than 12% students with disability)
- At risk communities according to the MIECHV needs assessment (including those with high rates for pre-term and low birth weight babies, crime, children under 18 in poverty, child abuse and domestic violence)
- Head Start/Early Head Start communities eligible based on high poverty rates and other risk factors

- American Indian Reservations

Of the communities identified, 49% are considered rural or frontier. These communities are home to 53,000 children under the age of five, which represents 74% of the State total pre-K population. The vast majority of young children in these communities live in poverty and 72% of them are currently enrolled in Medicaid.²²

Specific initiatives that make up Montana's High Quality Plan will be detailed throughout this proposal and include:

1. Improving cross system coordination and creating a Governor's Office of Early Childhood
2. Expanding Montana's TQRIS and incorporating all types of early learning and development programs
3. Integrating Montana's Early Learning Standards throughout the early learning, K-3 and workforce development systems
4. Implementing public preschool
5. Supporting target communities in strengthening coalitions that support increased involvement in STARS for child care and Head Start/Early Head Start and public preschool implementation through sub-grants to public schools and Head Starts
6. Expanding and enhancing professional development and degree opportunities
7. Developing and implementing a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment strategy
8. Ensuring family engagement strategies are infused throughout early learning systems
9. Ensuring all systems and programs are culturally and linguistically relevant, and supportive of parental choice

The plan is organized into six interconnected projects which are described more fully in the *Budget Narrative* section: **Governance** (including instituting a new Governor's Office of Early Childhood), **Workforce** development, **TQRIS** expansion, **Kindergarten Readiness** (including implementing a new public preschool model), **Standards** (including integrating the Montana Early Learning Standards throughout systems), and **Assessments** (including Kindergarten Entry Assessment strategy.)

²² Based on 2012 data provided by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Epidemiology and Scientific Support.

Goals, Objectives and Guiding Principles

(a) Ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the educational gaps between Children with High Needs and their peers

Montana's High Quality Early Learning Plan will operate under these Guiding Principles:

Families will be engaged and included every step of the way.

Children with high needs will be prioritized for services whenever possible and appropriate.

Resources will be allocated to ensure the prioritization of children with high needs.

Services will always be respectful of family and community culture.

Below is an overview of the ambitious yet achievable goals in Montana's Quality Plan.

<p>System Goal: <i>Ensure that Montana has a governance structure that provides a sustainable, comprehensive, and inclusive early childhood system that strengthens the quality of early learning programs and increases access for children with high-needs in order to improve child outcomes that lead to kindergarten readiness.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subordinate goal 1: Create a Governor's Office of Early Childhood. • Subordinate goal 2: Plan and implement public preschool in partnership with Montana's public schools and Head Starts. 	
<p>TQRIS Expansion: <i>Promote continuous quality improvement and expand high quality, accountable programs through Montana's TQRIS, ensuring access to high needs children. (B)</i></p>	
<p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote excellence in standards and quality levels in Montana's TQRIS 2. Assure cross sector inclusion, recognition and alignment as appropriate into Montana's TQRIS. 3. Increase the number of participating programs in the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program with prioritization for children with high needs. 4. Develop considerations for public preschool accreditation criteria as part of Montana's overarching TQRIS. 5. Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of TQRIS and conduct a validation study. 	<p><i>Outcomes by the end of the grant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% eligible licensed, registered child care facilities, tribal child care and Head Start/Early Head Start programs will participate in Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program. • 50% of children in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship (Subsidy) are in STAR 2 and 25% are in STAR 3 and above. • The Board of Public Education and Office of Public Instruction will have assurance and accreditation standards for public preschools.
<p>Statewide High Quality Early Learning and Development Standards: <i>Build strong alignment between Montana's Early Learning Standards, K-3 academic standards, and Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. (C1)</i></p>	
<p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build on the initial alignment process of ELS and Kindergarten Core Common Standards 	<p><i>Outcomes by the end of the grant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% STAR 3 programs and public preschools are trained on aligned standards.

<p>to create a cross walk document for use by early childhood practitioners.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Develop and promote ELS training to demonstrate how they should be used to inform curriculum, child assessment, and early learning environments cross sector. 3. Assure access to, and inclusion of, families and parents in the use of the standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% STAR 4 programs actively use Early Learning Standards to inform curriculum and meet the needs of individual children. • Complete alignment of the ESL and Essential Domains of School Readiness with Board of Public Education and OPI standards • Parents and families are informed and engaged in the use of the ELS
<p>Identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to Improve School Readiness: <i>Adopt ASQ-3™ and ASQ: SE as the common developmental screening tool to be implemented cross sector and create a coordinated referral process. (C3)</i></p>	
<p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bring stakeholders together to discuss how to use the ASQ-3™ and ASQ: SE throughout the early childhood system and agree to share individual screening results among programs serving the family to avoid duplication. 2. Utilize information obtained from the screening process to inform referrals and curriculum to meet individual child needs. 3. Through Part C, Part B, and community coalitions, create and coordinate consistent Child Find process across the state. 4. Promote and include ASQ-3™ and ASQ: SE and nutrition and physical activity guidelines in Montana's TWRIS. 	<p><i>Outcomes by the end of the grant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASQ-3™ and ASQ: SE used cross sector in at least the following: TQRIS, Maternal and Early Childhood Home Visiting, Part C, and Child and Family Services. • Results from child screenings are able to be used among programs and as part of the transition process between any and all programs (following the child.) • 100% of STAR 4 providers conduct ASQ-3™ and ASQ: SE, or utilize screening results by another provider, to inform curriculum and supports for the child.
<p>Engage and Support Families: <i>Continue to focus on the importance of family engagement by incorporating successes of the Family Support Advisory Council into Best Beginnings Advisory Council. (C4)</i></p>	
<p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formalize a Family Support Network for the State of Montana, emphasizing professional development and family support practices. 2. Develop Montana Family Engagement Framework. 3. Include Family Support Specialists in Montana Early Childhood Practitioner Registry to track continuing education and verify credentials. 4. Incorporate family literacy model utilized in Early Reading First and Montana Striving Readers into family engagement with the Early Learning Standards. 	<p><i>Outcomes by the end of the grant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A family support network is well established with a Family Engagement Framework to contribute to parent support and training, information centers, and cross sector professional development. • 50% of the Family Support Specialists through Part C and Head Start/Early Head Start Family Advocates are on the Early Childhood Practitioner Registry. • When families need child care, at least 50% of children in home visiting, Child Protective Services, and Part C are referred to high quality STARS facilities.

Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework/Progression of Credentials: <i>Promote consistent and high quality professional development opportunities to improve instruction in early learning programs that align with the Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base. (D1)</i>	
Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote and include Knowledge Base as identified professional development competency framework cross sector. 2. Expand on and develop additional credentials and/or certification for various Early Childhood practitioner roles cross system. 3. Engage post- secondary institutions and other Professional Development providers in assessment of programs offered, assuring common approach to teacher preparation, including alignment with Knowledge Base and Early Learning Standards. 	Outcomes by the end of the grant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplements to the Knowledge Base will be developed for identified sectors demonstrating cross sector understanding of common framework. • P-3 Credential/Endorsement is recognized and available as part of the teacher certification process. • Career pathways are supported from secondary, post-secondary, and non-credit professional development providers and align with Knowledge Base, Early Learning Standards, and NAEYC Standards for Teacher Preparation. • 100% of licensed and registered child care providers and staff are recognized in the Montana Practitioner Registry.
Support Educators in Improving Knowledge and Skills: <i>Recruit and retain early childhood teachers who work with high needs children and improve the effectiveness of teaching strategies to improve child outcomes. (D2)</i>	
Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a statewide overarching Early Childhood Technical Assistance System that incorporates cross sector strategies. 2. Create and enhance incentive options for workforce development and retention. 3. Identify strategy for tracking and reporting aggregate data on early childhood development degrees, advancement, and retention cross sector and cross system. 4. Increase the number of post-secondary institutions and other professional development providers to support an increased number of early childhood professionals receiving credentials and advancing on career pathway. 5. Develop and increase opportunities for rural communities through expanded online and distance education coursework 6. Develop a collaborative Master's Degree approach in Montana. 	Outcomes by the end of the grant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% increase in the number of enrolled students in pathways and/or post-secondary early childhood education. • Increase the number of Certified Infant Toddler Caregivers, Certified Preschool Caregivers, and Apprenticeship participants by 10%. • Increase the number of post-secondary institutions offering EC by at least 2 institutions. • The STARS Coaching System is implemented statewide and cross sector within a competency framework and coaches are supported through supervision, learning communities, ongoing professional development. • Expand online and distance offerings by 50%

Understand the Status of Children’s Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry: Identify and implement a strategy for Kindergarten Entry Assessment in Montana. (E)

<p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify statewide protocol to be used in communities through coalitions and LEAs that will be included as part of the KEA. 2. Research and evaluate current assessment practices in kindergarten across the state along with other state strategies. 3. Identify and implement a KEA strategy. 4. Include as part of the KEA process parent education that contributes to a parent’s ability to advocate for their child related to their child’s education. 	<p><i>Outcomes by the end of the grant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 50% of the Best Beginnings Community Coalitions, in partnership with LEAs, have adopted the transition protocol. • A common KEA strategy is used in high needs communities. • Kindergarten teachers, preschool teachers and administrators will have professional development opportunities provided through state conferences.
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Key Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Staff for this effort will include existing positions within the Participating State Agencies and Intermediary Organizations as well as new positions within each of the entities. The overall effort of Montana’s Early Learning Challenge will be overseen by the new Administrator of the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood and managed by a new Program Manager within that office who will be hired with grant funds. Other key management staff will include leads from the Office of Public Instruction and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. *(Please see page 37 in the Appendix for list of lead staff.)*

Overall Evaluation and Communication

Several initiatives within the Montana Early Learning Challenge will conduct focused or comprehensive evaluations as part of individual strategies, including an in-depth validity and reliability study of Best Beginnings STARS to Quality. In addition to these specific evaluation plans, the Montana Early Learning Challenge will contract with an evaluator to conduct a process evaluation of the entire project over 4 years. This evaluation is intended to assess the progress toward overall project goals as well as provide valuable feedback to ensure continuous quality improvement efforts maximize the outcomes of the project.

Likewise, several initiatives propose to work with communications experts to ensure that messaging is effective and reaching the target audience. This will include conducting communications campaigns in the target communities to support increased involvement in

Best Beginnings STARS to Quality, launching of public preschools and other activities. At this time, we do not anticipate conducting an overall project communications effort.

Rationale for Selecting Focused Investment Areas

(c) A specific rationale that justifies the State's choice to address the selected criteria in each Focused Investment Area (C), (D), and (E), including why these selected criteria will best achieve these goals.

Montana's Early Learning Challenge is a well-considered plan that builds on past successes and system strengths and optimizes opportunities. Even though work has been done and will continue to be done in all areas, Montana will target the following Focused Investment Areas to best utilize resources and meet plan objectives over the next four years.

Focused Investment Area	Rationale for Selection
C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.	Montana first published Early Learning Guidelines for children 3-5 in 2004 and for children 0-3 in 2009. Over the past two years, concerted effort has been devoted to updating these guidelines and integrating the latest research in early brain development and the harmful effects of toxic stress and trauma on young children. The new Early Learning Standards, which will be published in October 2013, cover children 0-5. Montana plans to use this Early Learning Challenge to implement a public awareness campaign to get the Early Learning Standards into the hands of educators, caregivers and parents across the state. Training will also be provided through Best Beginnings STARS and other vehicles to assist early educators and family support workers across sectors in integrating knowledge of the standards into their practice. Finally, the new Early Learning Standards will be used as part of the process for preschool accreditation.
(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental	Over the past two years, Montana has successfully implemented a cross sector initiative utilizing the Pyramid Model to support early educators in optimizing children's social and emotional development and addressing any behavioral needs. This system is now being used in Best Beginnings STARS to Quality, the child welfare system, home visiting programs and schools. Building on this successful experience, Montana plans to engage

needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.	these same partners to identify and implement a common screening tool that can be used cross sector to support transitions and inform needed services and curriculum. At this time, Montana plans to endorse the ASQ-3™ and ASQ: SE as this common screening tool to help early educators and family support workers across sectors to identify health, behavioral and developmental needs in all children and particularly in children with high needs.
(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.	Family engagement is a common value throughout Montana's early learning system. It is a core domain in the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program and integral to the work of Best Beginnings Community Coalitions. It is a key component in the assurances and accreditation standards of Montana public schools as well as the Head Start Standards; parents serve on Policy Councils for every Head Start and Early Head Start program in the State. Montana's Part C Program embraces family engagement through their Family Support Advisory Committee and their practice modality, Routines-Based Early Intervention. Yet, more can always be done to effectively engage and partner with parents. This Early Learning Challenge will afford Montana additional resources to enhance and expand family engagement opportunities, both at the individual family and systems levels.
(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.	The workforce development system in Montana is based on a knowledge and competency framework and much work has already been done to align educational opportunities and create career pathways for early educators. However, this system has not previously included Part C providers, home visitors, or family support workers. With the implementation of a public preschool model, Montana is considering development of a P-3 endorsement/credential for teachers. These enhancements will strengthen career opportunities and pathways for all professionals working with young children.
(D)(2) Supporting Early	The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program has implemented incentive awards and career ladders and Montana has made significant

Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.	progress in improving training and coaching opportunities and implementing an apprenticeship program. However, given the vast distances and limited resources in the State, degree opportunities are limited and pay scales are still low. This Early Learning Challenge will assist Montana in expanding degree opportunities throughout the State and will provide scholarships for continuing education.
(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.	Montana kindergarten teachers struggle to address the readiness gaps of incoming students. The State is ready to address this system shortcoming by developing and implementing a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment strategy that will improve transitions and provide teachers with the information they need to tailor instruction and meet the individual needs of all students. Ultimately, Montana views an effective KEA strategy as a primary tool in addressing the readiness gap for children with high needs.

Identification of the two or more selection criteria that the State has chosen to address in Focused Investment Area (C):

Please check the box to indicate which selection criterion or criteria in Focused Investment Area (D) the State is choosing to address

- ☒ (C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.
- ☐ (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.
- ☒ (C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.
- ☒ (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.

Identification of the one or more selection criteria that the State has chosen to address in Focused Investment Area (D):

Please check the box to indicate which selection criterion or criteria in Focused Investment Area (D) the State is choosing to address

- ☒ (D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.
- ☒ (D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Identification of the one or more selection criteria that the State has chosen to address in Focused Investment Area (E):

Please check the box to indicate which selection criterion or criteria in Focused Investment Area (E) the State is choosing to address

- ☒ (E)(1) Understanding the status of children’s learning and development at kindergarten entry.
- ☐ (E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.

(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State. (10 points)

The extent to which the State has established, or has a High-Quality Plan to establish, strong participation in and commitment to the State Plan by Participating State Agencies and other early learning and development stakeholders by--

(a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability, and describing--

(1) The organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures such as children's cabinets, councils, and commissions, if any already exist and are effective;

(2) The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care, each Participating State Agency, and the State's Interagency Coordinating Council for Part C of IDEA, and other partners, if any;

(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes; and

(4) The plan for when and how the State will involve representatives from Participating Programs, Early Childhood Educators or their representatives, parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the activities carried out under the grant;

(b) Demonstrating the Participating State Agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan, to the governance structure of the grant, and to effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOUs or other binding agreements between the State and each Participating State Agency--

(1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan;

(2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and

(3) Signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency; and

(c) Demonstrating commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist the State in reaching the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion (A)(2)(a),

(1) Detailed and persuasive letters of intent or support from Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, and, if applicable, local early learning councils; and

(2) Letters of intent or support from such other stakeholders as Early Childhood Educators or their representatives; the State's legislators; local community leaders; State or local school boards; representatives of private and faith-based early learning programs; other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, tribal, education association leaders); adult education and family literacy State and local leaders; family and community organizations; representatives from the disability community, the English learner community, and entities representing other Children with High Needs (e.g., parent councils, nonprofit organizations, local foundations, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations); libraries and children's museums; health providers; public television stations, and postsecondary institutions.

Governance Structure

(a) Demonstrating how the Participating State Agencies and other partners, if any, will identify a governance structure for working together that will facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision making, effectively allocate resources, and create long-term sustainability

Across agencies and sectors, the State of Montana is committed to developing a coordinated system that addresses all the needs of our youngest citizens. Historically, these agencies and

sectors have operated in silos but, in recent years, much progress has been made to coordinate programs and services through system collaboration efforts. Montana's High Quality Plan, and the system and governance changes it will require to be implemented, is strongly supported by the Office of Public Instruction, the Governor's Office, DPHHS, and OCHE. These changes are, in fact, necessary to further align and support effective strategies to support and prepare children for school.

To continue breaking down historical silos that exist within state government, DPHHS, with the guidance and support of the Governor's Office, is exploring options for a restructure to bring services together that support early childhood. The vision is to create a new Governor's Office of Early Childhood that will sit within the Department of Public Health and Human Services-Economic Security Services Branch and oversee all services for children ages 0-8 and their families focused on healthy development and school readiness, including prenatal care. This formation of a new Governor's Office of Early Childhood and the reorganization of existing programs within DPHHS will require additional evaluation and a phased implementation scheduled to take approximately 12-18 months. *(Please see Organizational Charts for new Governor's Office of Early Childhood on page 42 of the Appendix.)*

The Best Beginnings Advisory Council will serve as the oversight group for this effort and will include representatives from all of the Participating State Agencies and program partners. Current Council members are often program managers from each organization or agency, but may include directors of organizations or other staff, particularly when organizations are small. With the implementation of Montana's Early Learning Challenge, the Best Beginnings Advisory Council will be expanded and restructured to include high level decision makers from each Participating State Agency as well as additional parent and community representatives. The Governor will appoint a Chair of the Council and a new Best Beginnings Executive Committee will replace the current "Ex-Officio Member" structure made up of the leaders of each Participating State Agency plus the heads of key partner organizations. The Executive Committee will meet two to three times a year and agendas for those meetings will be set by the new Best Beginnings Steering Committee to include issues that can only be resolved at the highest levels of leadership. The new Steering Committee will be a smaller, adept subset of the Council membership that keeps the Council's work

moving forward, coordinates and plans meeting content, reports, etc. Overall Advisory Council membership will be expanded to include the Family Support Advisory Committee and parents. The Best Beginnings Advisory Council Coordinator serves the Council and works with all components of the governance structure. *(Please see Best Beginnings Advisory Council organization structure on page 43 of the Appendix.)*

This new alignment will allow the Best Beginnings Advisory Council to minimize duplication of efforts and services and take a lead role in the systems coordination and reform proposed for Montana's Early Learning Challenge. The Advisory Council will be elevated to the status of a Governor's Council and membership will be regularly evaluated and adjusted to ensure that it meets the needs of the programs it support and advises.

As the Lead Agency, DPHHS, through the Governor's Office of Early Childhood, will manage the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant. A Grant Coordinator will work closely with the Best Beginnings Advisory Council and Executive Committee to ensure all programs and policies support Montana's High Quality Plan for early learning and development.

Decision Making and Conflict Resolution

Montana is committed to honoring diverse voices, engaging parents and other key stakeholders, and creating a culture of cooperation and collaboration through this Early Learning Challenge. Systems change is difficult and will involve shifts in decision making and resource allocation, which can be fraught with conflict. All Participating State Agencies and current members of the Best Beginnings Advisory Council have agreed to the following consensus decision making and conflict resolution protocol developed by Karen Ray Associates. This protocol has been used successfully by Best Beginnings Local Coalitions to navigate any disputes.

We agree to abide by this decision making process:

- 1. We talk about issues at this table, maintaining dialogue until a decision is reached.*
- 2. We share all relevant data freely, collecting and sharing information that helps us make decisions.*
- 3. We set out to achieve consensus. We do not take "positions" early in our discussions. If a particular agency says "no" to a decision, then that agency clearly*

and honestly states why. Partners help problem-solve, create alternative solutions, or act in other ways to help that agency perceive options to saying “no”.

4. *If we cannot agree after two or three meetings, we set aside special meeting time with a facilitator to focus on this decision. If we still cannot come to consensus, we call a moratorium on this issue for a specified time.*
5. *We represent the consensus decisions of this group in a positive light to our individual Boards. We live with our individual Boards’ decision.*
6. *We remember that we cannot dictate what an agency should/could do, and that the changes we need to make are the changes our community wants us to make. We’re operating in a very big picture, and we are accountable to all those in the larger community, not just to each other.*
7. *When three or more individuals from different organizations experience disagreements that limit the Council’s ability to carry out its mission, then the following action steps occur:*
 - a. *The chair formally initiates the protocols, and lays out meeting dates and timelines for step 4 above.*
 - b. *A neutral facilitator is identified, in case facilitation is necessary.*
 - c. *A final deadline for making the decision is identified.*

Table (A)(3)-1: Governance-related roles and responsibilities	
Participating State Agency	Governance-related roles and responsibilities
Department of Public Health and Human Services (Lead Agency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lead Agency/Grant Oversight ▪ Serve on Executive Committee of Best Beginnings Advisory Council ▪ Oversight of Best Beginnings Advisory Council ▪ Coordination of Best Beginnings Local Councils ▪ Administration and Oversight of the following efforts and programs involved in Montana’s EL Challenge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Early Childhood Project ○ Child Care Licensing ○ Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Network ○ Child Care and Development Fund ○ Montana Children’s Trust Fund ○ TANF Block Grant

Table (A)(3)-1: Governance-related roles and responsibilities

Participating State Agency	Governance-related roles and responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant ○ STARS to Quality QRIS ○ Family Support Advisory Council for Part C of IDEA ○ Head Start State Collaboration Office ○ Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program ○ Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment Program (EPSDT) ○ Woman, Infants and Children Special Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC) ○ Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) ○ No Kid Hungry ○ Healthy Montana Teen Parent Program ○ Children’s Mental Health Bureau ▪ Coordination and alignment of data
Office of Public Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State Education Agency ▪ Serve on Executive Committee of Best Beginnings Advisory Council ▪ Administration and Oversight of the following efforts and programs involved in Montana’s EL Challenge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Full-Day Kindergarten Program ○ Special Education Preschool Services ○ Early Reading First Centers of Excellence ○ Striving Readers Program ○ Early Childhood Project REAL ○ Early Childhood Partnership for Professional Development ○ Graduation Matters ○ Title I Oversight of ESEA ○ Part B of IDEA ○ Indian Education ○ Public Preschool ▪ Coordination and alignment of data
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serve on Executive Committee of Best Beginnings Advisory Council ▪ Serve on Best Beginnings Professional Development Committee workgroups on Early Learning Standards and MT Early Care and Education Knowledge Base ▪ Administration of the following efforts and programs involved in Montana’s EL Challenge:

Table (A)(3)-1: Governance-related roles and responsibilities	
Participating State Agency	Governance-related roles and responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium ○ National Native Children's Trauma Center ▪ Coordination and alignment of data
Other Entities	
State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advise Executive Committee of Best Beginnings Advisory Council ▪ Align and coordinate services and programs ▪ Coordinate and advise local councils
State Interagency Coordinating Council for Part C of IDEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leverage family and parent participation in BBAC
Other: State Board of Public Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serve on Executive Committee of Best Beginnings Advisory Council ▪ Preschool accreditation ▪ P-3 teacher licensure/credential

Table (A)(3)-2: Early Learning Intermediary Organizations and local early learning councils (if applicable)

List every Intermediary Organization and local early learning council (if applicable) in the State	Did this entity provide a letter of intent or support which is included in the Appendix (Y/N)?
Best Beginnings Advisory Council	Y
Board of Public Education	Y
Board of Regents	Y
Early Childhood Project	Y
Family Support Advisory Committee	Y
Montana Children's Trust Fund	Y
Montana Head Start Association	Y
Montana CCR&R Network	Y
<i>Community Coalitions</i>	
Butte Best Beginnings Council	Y
Great Falls Early Childhood	Y

Table (A)(3)-2: Early Learning Intermediary Organizations and local early learning councils (if applicable)

List every Intermediary Organization and local early earning council (if applicable) in the State	Did this entity provide a letter of intent or support which is included in the Appendix (Y/N)?
Coalition	
Flathead Early Childhood and Family Advisory Council	Y
Hill County Early Childhood Investment Team	Y
Lake County Best Beginnings Children's Partnership	Y
Early Childhood Coalition of the Greater Helena Area	Y
Missoula Best Beginnings Council Missoula Community Council for Families, Infants, and Children	Y
Park County Pathway Initiative	Y
Ravalli County 123 Invest In Me!	Y
Billings Best Beginnings Council	Y
Greater Gallatin Early Childhood Community Coalition	Y
Big Horn County Best Beginnings Early Childhood Coalition, CSKT Best Beginnings Children's Partnership, Eastern Montana – 3 (Custer, Dawson and Richland Counties), Fort Peck Best Beginnings Early Childhood Coalition, Lincoln County Best Beginnings Early Childhood Coalition, Mineral County Best Beginnings Council, Northern Cheyenne Best Beginnings Community Council, Roosevelt County Best Beginnings Early Childhood Coalition, Rosebud County Best Beginnings Community Council	N [1]
<i>Preschool Programs [2]</i>	
Central Montana Head Start	Y
Great Falls Public Schools	Y
Hardin Schools	Y

Table (A)(3)-2: Early Learning Intermediary Organizations and local early learning councils (if applicable)

List every Intermediary Organization and local early learning council (if applicable) in the State	Did this entity provide a letter of intent or support which is included in the Appendix (Y/N)?
HRDC Head Start Bozeman	Y
RMDC Helena Head Start	Y
<p><i>[1] While 23 community coalitions have formed across the state, they are in various stages of development.</i></p> <p><i>[2] These preschool programs have been participated in OPI Striving Readers Program and will be eligible to be in the first group of Centers of Excellence.</i></p>	

(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant. (15 points)

The extent to which the State Plan--

(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources (e.g., CCDF; Title I and II of ESEA; IDEA; Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; State preschool; Head Start Collaboration funding; MIECHV program; Title V MCH Block Grant; TANF; Medicaid; child welfare services under Title IV (B) and (E) of the Social Security Act; Statewide Longitudinal Data System; foundation; other private funding sources) for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, including how the quality set-asides in CCDF will be used;

(b) Describes, in both the budget tables and budget narratives, how the State will effectively and efficiently use funding from this grant to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan, in a manner that--

(1) Is adequate to support the activities described in the State Plan;

(2) Includes costs that are reasonable and necessary in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the activities described in the State Plan and the number of children to be served; and

(3) Details the amount of funds budgeted for Participating State Agencies, localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners, and the specific activities to be implemented with these funds consistent with the State Plan, and demonstrates that a significant amount of funding will be devoted to the local implementation of the State Plan; and

(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

The State's response to (A)(4)(b) will be addressed in the Budget Section (section VIII of the application) and reviewers will evaluate the State's Budget Section response when scoring (A)(4). In the text box below, the State shall write its full response to (A)(4)(a) and (A)(4)(c) and may also include any additional information it believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. If the State has included relevant attachments in the Appendix, these should be described in the narrative and clearly cross-referenced to allow the reviewers to locate them easily.

Utilization of Existing Funding to Support Montana's High Quality Plan

(a) Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources

Montana will utilize the following existing Federal, State, private and local resources to support the implementation of its High Quality Early Learning Plan.

Striving Readers – Federal grant to advance literacy development in children attending preschool and Head Start programs in high need and rural areas. This grant will sunset in FY 2016. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 6,800,000

Early Reading First – Federal grant supporting local efforts to improve literacy. This grant sunsets in FY 2014. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 429,500

Special Education Preschool – State funding to serve children 3-5 with developmental delays or disabilities. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 1,100,000

Infinite Campus – State funding supporting student information system at OPI for Part B and kindergarten student data and efforts to incorporate publicly-funded preschool information. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 853,849

Full Time Kindergarten – State funds to support full-day kindergarten programs. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$28,257,838

Part B Match – State contributions to IDEA Part B, Section 619 special education services for children ages 3 through kindergarten entry with disabilities.

Estimated FY 2014 funding:

(b)(5)

IDEA Part C – State contributions to support services to children 0-3 suspected to have or diagnosed with developmental delays or disabilities.

Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 2,993,052

Newborn screening – Funding to support newborn hearing and genetic screenings.

Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 281,630

CCDF – State match to Child Care and Development Fund to support scholarships for children with high needs and/or disabilities. Estimated FY 2014 funding:

(b)(5)

TANF Transfer – Block Grant Funds devoted to early learning and development programs.

Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 7,676,010

Working Caretaker Relative – TANF Direct funding to support child care scholarships for relative caregivers.

Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 600,000

CHIPRA Bonus – Federal funding to be dedicated to the expansion of the State TQRIS system.

Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 2,00,000

Pregnant and Parenting Teens – Federal grant supporting Healthy Montana Teen Parent Program.

Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 1,000,000

Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems – Federal grant supporting system coordination and improvement efforts. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 140,000

Head Start Collaboration – Federal grant to support training and technical assistance for HS and EHS programs statewide. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 118,413

Title IV E – Waiver funding (federal) to support child welfare support services for children 0-5. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 543,834

Child and Adult Care Food Program – Federal funding supporting food assistance for child care programs receiving subsidy funds. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$11,983,152

State Special – Childcare prevention and stabilization funding. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 832,582

General Fund – Supports Childcare Prevention and Stabilization funding, allocations to adjust provider rates, direct scholarship assistance, and Head Start Collaboration Office. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 9,022,241

Casey Family Foundation – Private funding to support development and implementation of assessment process and supports for child well-being among children in foster care. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 125,000

Ready to Read – Federal grant awarded to Montana State Library to support emerging literacy skill in young children. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 44,587

Ready to Read – Private funding to support emerging literacy skill in young children. Estimated FY 2014 funding: \$ 7,500

Sustainability of Efforts to Maintain Services to High Needs Children

(c) Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded

Many of the existing resources listed above are dedicated to serving children with high needs and will enable the state to maintain this priority service. Federal funding through the Race to

the Top Early Learning Challenge will primarily be used for capacity building efforts that will not have ongoing impact on State or local budgets.

We recognize, however, that more must be done. Early Learning Challenge will provide critical funding to build upon existing investments, help create the infrastructure, lay the groundwork for universal preschool, and to develop the curriculum and prepare highly trained teachers and early learning providers that will be required to sustain such a system.

Elected officials at the highest levels in Montana have recognized the importance of early learning not just for our students, but for the economic success of our state. We know that in order to guarantee a student's long-term success, we must reach our children before they even reach kindergarten. We know that every dollar spent on high-quality early care and education programs saves \$9 down the road. By investing early, we can improve school readiness, shrink the achievement gap, increase graduation rates and prepare the next generation of workers and parents. To this end, Montana, in the last five years, has seen a commitment across both the public and private sector to improve availability and access to early learning and development systems and programs. Moving forward, Governor Bullock is committed to including significant investments for early childhood in his budget for the next biennium.

To sustain the work proposed in this application Montana will:

- Build upon existing investments
- Build upon and expand public private partnerships that support sustainability and commitment and to early learning and development
- Actively engage participating agencies and local school districts to plan for sustainability at both a state and local level
- Continue to educate and draw more stakeholders into the planning process to build necessary support to pursue legislative initiatives that will ensure the sustainability of early learning and development programs.

Table (A)(4) – 1 Existing other Federal, State, private, and local funds to be used to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan.

Source of Funds [1]	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2015	Fiscal Year 2016	Fiscal Year 2017	Total
OPI TOTAL	\$79,088,518	\$74,742,232	\$73,435,977	\$74,311,343	\$301,578,070
<i>Striving Readers</i>	\$6,800,000	\$2,100,000	\$0	\$0	\$8,900,000
<i>Early Reading First</i>	\$429,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$429,500
<i>Special Education Preschool grants</i>	\$1,100,000	\$1,100,000	\$1,100,000	\$1,100,000	\$4,400,000
<i>Infinite Campus</i>	\$853,849	\$875,000	\$875,000	\$875,000	\$3,478,849
<i>Full-time Kindergarten</i>	\$28,257,838	\$29,019,901	\$29,813,646	\$30,689,012	\$117,780,397
<i>Part B Match</i>	(b)(5)				
DPHHS Total					
<i>IDEA Part C</i>	\$2,993,052	\$2,998,768	\$3,004,495	\$3,010,233	\$12,006,548
<i>Newborn Screening</i>	\$281,630	\$281,427	\$281,427	\$281,427	\$1,125,911
<i>CCDF</i>	\$14,696,153	\$14,696,153	\$14,696,153	\$14,696,153	\$58,784,612
<i>TANF Transfer</i>	\$7,676,010	\$7,676,010	\$7,676,010	\$7,676,010	\$30,704,040
<i>Working Caretaker Relative-TANF Direct</i>	\$466,833	\$466,833	\$466,833	\$466,833	\$1,867,332
<i>CHIPRA Bonus [2]</i>	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,000,000
<i>Pregnant and Parenting Teens</i>	\$1,000,000	\$579,538	\$579,538	\$579,538	\$2,738,614
<i>Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems</i>	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$560,000
<i>Head Start State Collaboration</i>	\$118,413	\$118,413	\$118,413	\$118,413	\$473,652
<i>Title IV-E</i>	\$543,834	\$543,834	\$543,834	\$543,834	\$2,175,336
<i>Child & Adult Care Food Program</i>	\$11,983,152	\$12,397,856	\$12,645,813	\$12,898,729	\$49,925,551

Table (A)(4) – 1 Existing other Federal, State, private, and local funds to be used to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan.

Source of Funds [1]	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2015	Fiscal Year 2016	Fiscal Year 2017	Total
<i>State Special [3]</i>	\$832,582	\$832,582	\$832,582	\$832,582	\$3,330,328
<i>General Fund [4]</i>	\$9,022,241	\$9,772,375	\$9,022,241	\$9,022,241	\$36,839,098
<i>Casey Family Foundation</i>	\$125,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$125,000
Montana State Library Total	\$52,087	\$44,587	44,587	44,587	185,848
<i>Ready 2 Read – Federal grants</i>	\$44,587	\$44,587	\$44,587	\$44,587	\$178,348
<i>Ready 2 Read – private</i>	\$7,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$7,500

[1] Funding as listed above is based on the 2014 and 2015 Montana State Fiscal Year Biennial Budget for Infinite Campus, Full-time kindergarten, Title IV-E, General and State Special funds. Federal projections are based on current year information provided on the most recent notice of Grant Award.

[2] The legislature approved \$2,400,000 federal CHIPRA bonus funds that the state will receive, for the Best Beginning STARS program in the Early Childhood Services Bureau. The legislature restricted funding for this purpose and added an order of priority in the event CHIPRA grant funds are insufficient to fund all appropriations. Based on order of priority, the Governor's Budget Office currently estimates that \$2 million will be available.

[3] Childcare Prevention and Stabilization Funding.

[4] This general fund component of the Childcare Prevention and Stabilization funding (\$200,728) consists of funding for CCDF MOE, CCDF Matching as well as allocations to adjust provider rates and federal poverty index. Additionally a portion of this funding supports direct services for scholarships. A small component, \$30,000 annually supports the matching Heat Start State Collaboration Grant.

CORE AREA SECTION B - High-Quality, Accountable Programs

(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. (10 points)

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and adopted, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and adopt, a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that--

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--

- (1) Early Learning and Development Standards;*
- (2) A Comprehensive Assessment System;*
- (3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;*
- (4) Family engagement strategies;*
- (5) Health promotion practices; and*
- (6) Effective data practices;*

(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children; and

(c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Developing Montana's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

Montana is committed to expanding and enhancing support for quality programs that prioritize healthy children in safe and supportive environments who are kindergarten-ready. Montana has adopted a Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System for Early Childhood Programs including child care providers, Head Start, and Early Head Start, titled *Best Beginnings STARS to Quality*. The categories of standards within the STARS program align with the Public School Tiered Assurance Standards for K-12 public schools, developed through the Board of Public Education. (See Montana's Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System on page 30 of the Appendix for a description of the alignment between these two elements of Montana's TQRIS.)

Montana was at the forefront of efforts to improve the quality of early childhood education, having implemented its first Quality Rating System a decade ago. That system offered tiered reimbursement rates and required program accreditation to reach the highest rating. In 2007, Montana's Early Childhood Advisory Council invited interested stakeholders to assess, review and provide future recommendations. The purpose of those meetings was to evaluate existing state initiatives targeted toward quality improvement and identify if programs were successful in increasing quality experiences for children over time. Out of this collective work, Montana developed a vision for quality early childhood education and identified a comprehensive approach to investing in and ensuring strong quality outcomes for children through the newly developed, Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program.

Best Beginnings STARS to Quality – Tiered Program Standards

(a) *Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--*
(1) *Early Learning and Development Standards;*

Best Beginnings STARS to Quality aligns **quality indicators** with **supports and incentives** for early childhood programs and professionals. The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality system includes several components: a **tiered quality rating and improvement framework**; **workforce and professional development** supports to improve individual educator skills and abilities; and, **infrastructure supports** to help programs implement the system, including training, coaching and technical assistance. Workforce support is provided to assist educators in their progression through the Montana Early Care and Education Career Path. *(See Montana Early Care and Education Career Path on page 154 of the Appendix.)*

The criteria for each STAR rating are based on extensive research and align with the Compendium of Quality Rating Systems and Evaluations¹ and with NAEYC, Head Start and other program quality standards. **Program categories** assessed through the rating system include:

1. Education, Qualifications & Training
2. High Quality Supportive Environments (including health, social emotional support, environmental design, and curriculum)
3. Staff/Caregiver-to-Child Ratio & Group Size
4. Family and Community partnerships
5. Leadership & Program Management

Based on meeting criteria in all five categories, programs advance from a 1-STAR rating to a 5-STAR rating. Each progressive STAR rating is dependent on programs maintaining their earlier rating and adding quality elements to achieve the next level. STAR ratings are reassessed annually based on validation of the quality level and achievements toward the program improvement plan. Montana's Child Care Resource and Referral agencies are the point of entry, and provide technical assistance to assist programs through the application process, which often includes assistance securing documentation for certain criteria and developing program

¹ Administration for Children and Families, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. and Child Trends (2010). Compendium of Quality Rating Systems and Evaluations.

improvement plans. Support for implementing improvement plans is provided by the CCR&R agencies as well as the Early Childhood Project, higher education and other professional development resources determined by the State.

Montana's **Early Learning Standards** are included in determining program ratings related to the *High Quality Supportive Environments* category. The expectation for alignment with Montana's Early Learning Standards begin at STAR 2 and become increasingly incorporated at the higher levels.

(a) *Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--*
(2) *A Comprehensive Assessment System;*

A Comprehensive Program Assessment System is used to evaluate learning environment, individualized instruction practices, provider/child interactions, and program business practices. These assessments start at STAR 3 and include: the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R), the Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R), the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised (FCCERS-R), the Program Administration Scale (PAS) and the Business Administration Scale (BAS). To reach a 5-STAR rating, programs must achieve accreditation status through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) or meet the Head Start Performance Standards. Quality Improvement Plans, another key component of the system, are developed by each program based on data generated from assessment tools and in assisting the program in continuing to advance through the rating scale.

At present, no individual child assessments are required, but at STAR 4, programs must demonstrate that individual child and class observation is used to inform instruction and shape the learning environment. In the coming year, Montana plans to integrate individual child screenings into this assessment system, requiring that programs utilize the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3™) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social and Emotional (ASQ:SE) to assist in evaluating children's developmental progress and inform instruction. Utilizing these standardized screening tools will also better support programs in early identification of any developmental delays.

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--
(3) Early Childhood Educator qualifications;

Early Childhood Educator Qualifications are a major component of the rating scale. Programs move up the scale, in part, by encouraging staff to develop their professional skills by attaining registry and/or degree status and accessing training opportunities. Best Beginnings STARS to Quality offers many of the required trainings to aid programs in achieving this goal through the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network, the Early Childhood Project (ECP) and other resources. Throughout every STAR level, expectations are incorporated and provide for a continuum of course work from entry level to advanced level. Part of the incentive structure is intended to assist early childhood staff in reaching their educational goals. *(Please see BB STARS to Quality Rating Scale on page 156 of the Appendix for training requirements and STARS Workforce Incentive Chart on page 159 of the Appendix.)*

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--
(4) Family engagement strategies;

Family Engagement Strategies are covered under the *Family and Community Partnerships* category. Programs are encouraged to involve families in learning center activities and special events, provide information and coaching to assist parents/caregivers in utilizing home-based and community activities, and involving families in the development of children's educational plans. Training on effective family engagement strategies, including training on cultural competency, is provided by CCR&R agencies, the Early Childhood Project and other resources. As we look to the future, Montana will also require early childhood educators in STARS facilities be trained in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and that trauma informed practices will be incorporated into working with children with high needs to better engage their families and caregivers.

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--
(5) Health promotion practices; and

Health Promotion Practices are an essential component of the *High Quality Supportive Environments* category. This includes daily health checks, personal care routines, nutritional education and the provision of healthy meals, the use of safety procedures (safe sleep positions, emergency preparedness, medication administration, etc.), support for breastfeeding, wellness policies, and other measures. In addition, the Environmental Rating Scales also include health

and safety measures based on the *Caring for Our Children Framework*.² As part of the infrastructure support offered by Best Beginnings, Montana has a statewide Child Care Health Consultant under contract to work with STARS programs as well as Child Care Resource and Referral agency technical assistance staff.

The state recognizes the need to adapt a health promotion curriculum and *I am Moving! I am Learning!* has been identified for common use among STARS providers. Once Nutrition and Physical Activity Guidelines for Young Children are completed for Montana through the Health Committee of the Best Beginnings Advisory Council and the Nutrition and Physical Activity (NAPA) staff, they will be incorporated into the STARS criteria.

(a) Is based on a statewide set of tiered Program Standards that include--
(6) Effective data practices;

Effective Data Practices are expected to be maintained as part of program operations and are assessed through the PAS and BAS tools. This includes program record keeping, fiscal management and other business practices as well as collecting and managing child-level data to guide instruction and ensure developmental progress for each individual child.

At the statewide administration and evaluation level, Montana is tracking program outcome data as a result of STAR level achievement and assessment data. Montana uses the following databases to track STARS data:

- CCUBS (Child Care Licensing, Contract, Payment, and Subsidy System)
- Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry and database
- Branagh Information Group for Assessment data ³

Individual programs utilize the STARS Application and Approval site within the Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry database at the Early Childhood Project to report and track individual program achievements and data. This Registry interfaces with the CCUBS system and the Branagh database.

² American Academy of Pediatrics American Public Health Association, and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. *Caring For Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs*, 3rd edition.

³ Branagh is a sole proprietor who has an established agreement with the authors of the Rating Scales for tracking of data as a result of the rating scales. Montana contracts with Branagh for data use to comply with copyright.

Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Rating Scale Standards

(b) Is clear and has standards that are measurable, meaningfully differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards that lead to improved learning outcomes for children;

High standards and expectations are communicated throughout the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality rating scale. The individual standards to achieve each STAR-level are clearly communicated to programs entering the system through a variety of materials, including the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Rating Scale found on page 156 in the *Appendix*. This document outlines the basic criteria used to assess the level of quality needed for each STAR rating. To advance in STAR rating requires attention to multiple and diverse aspects of quality, ranging from the physical environment of learning spaces to the nature of relationships between caregiver and child, legal requirements for operation, education and credentials of educators, and engagement and interaction with families and the community.

The standards are measureable and meaningfully differentiate levels of quality leading to improved learning outcomes for children. They are based on extensive evidence and research into what constitutes a quality early learning environment that supports optimal child development and kindergarten readiness.⁴ Monetary incentives are provided based on the STAR level achieved as well as for continual program improvement. *(See Section B.4. for the table of incentive payments.)* If a program moves down a level during an annual renewal, the incentives decrease. In addition to scale criteria, programs must also maintain acceptable provider/child ratios, maintain their license/registration and meet other eligibility criteria (detailed below.)

Eligibility and Linkage to State Licensing System

c) Is linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs.

Certain eligibility criteria must be met to participate in the program and move through the STARS system. Any State of Montana child care provider that has a **regular license or registration**, a regular state licensed Early Head Start or Head Start program, or a tribal program that is state licensed or registered, or has a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) requested by the tribe that demonstrates the equivalent to Montana license or registration

⁴ Administration for Children and Families, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. and Child Trends (2010). Compendium of Quality Rating Systems and Evaluations.

standards are met, may be eligible. Tribal programs may also demonstrate that they are in the process of pursuing a formal MOU with the State. Programs must attain full compliance with licensing rules to remain in the STARS program. Programs must meet licensing requirements and have an active and current license to participate in STARS, and must have been in business and licensed in Montana for one full year. Violations of the State licensing rules are communicated to the STARS Program Specialist and plans of correction as well as additional technical assistance and coaching are applied. As Montana looks to the future, it will be adjusting licensing standards to include STAR 1 criteria, and all regularly licensed and registered providers, Early Head Start, Head Start, tribal child care and tribal Head Start and Early Head Start will be recognized at STAR 1 and will have the opportunity to progress through the STARS levels 2-5 based on meeting the defined criteria.

Table (B)(1)-1: Status of all Program Standards currently used in the State							
	<i>Program Standards Elements⁵</i> <i>If the Program Standards address the element, place an "X" in that box</i>						
List each set of existing Program Standards currently used in the State; specify which programs in the State use the standards	Early Learning and Development Standards	Comprehensive Assessment Systems	Qualified workforce	Family engagement	Health promotion	Effective data practices	Other 1.Program Management/ Leadership 2.Ratios/ Group Size
STAR 1		X Baseline ERS assessment for program entry	X	X licensing standards	X	X	X Licensing standards
STAR 2	X	X Self-assessment	X	X	X	X	X
STAR 3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

⁵ Please refer to the definition of Program Standards for more information on the elements.

Table (B)(1)-1: Status of all Program Standards currently used in the State							
	<i>Program Standards Elements⁵</i> <i>If the Program Standards address the element, place an "X" in that box</i>						
List each set of existing Program Standards currently used in the State; specify which programs in the State use the standards	Early Learning and Development Standards	Comprehensive Assessment Systems	Qualified workforce	Family engagement	Health promotion	Effective data practices	Other 1. Program Management/ Leadership 2. Ratios/ Group Size
STAR 4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
STAR 5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Please refer to Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Rating Scale on page 156 in the Appendix Montana has a matrix for family and group providers as well, but it is very similar to the attached Rating Scale.</i>							

(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

The extent to which the State has maximized, or has a High-Quality Plan to maximize, program participation in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--

(1) State-funded preschool programs;

(2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs;

(3) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under section 619 of Part B of IDEA and Part C of IDEA;

(4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of ESEA; and

(5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the CCDF program;

(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs (e.g., maintaining or increasing subsidy reimbursement rates, taking actions to ensure affordable co-payments, providing incentives to high-quality providers to participate in the subsidy program); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Montana TQRIS Expansion – Ambitious Goals and Action Plan

Montana has set ambitious goals for expanding to a statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System with the potential for additional participation. Achievable goals relate to the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program and to the public preschool assurance and accreditation standards, as illustrated by the Goals for The Montana Early Learning Challenge.

TQRIS Expansion: *Promote continuous quality improvement and expand high quality, accountable programs through Montana's TQRIS, ensuring access for high needs children.*

Objectives:

1. Promote excellence in standards and quality levels in Montana's TQRIS.
2. Assure cross sector inclusion, recognition and alignment as appropriate into Montana's TQRIS.
3. Increase the number of participating programs in the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program, with prioritization for children with high needs.
4. Develop considerations for public preschool assurance standards as part of Montana's overarching TQRIS.
5. Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of TQRIS and conduct a validation study

Outcomes by the end of the grant:

- 100% eligible licensed, registered child care facilities and Head Start/Early Head Start programs will participate in Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program.
- 50% of children in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship (Subsidy) are in STAR 2 and 25% are in STAR 3 and above.
- The Board of Public Education and Office of Public Instruction have assurance and accreditation standards for public preschools.

Action Plan	
	<p>Update licensing standards and incorporate trauma informed practices, ASQ-3™ and ASQ-SE into STARS standards.</p> <p>Develop STARS communications plan that is culturally and linguistically relevant to providers, parents, and general public.</p> <p>Adjust STARS criteria to include Head Start/Early Head Start and tribal child care programs</p> <p>Build and expand infrastructure to support additional programs in STARS.</p> <p>Identify considerations for assurance and accreditation criteria through OPI and Board of Public Education for public preschools.</p> <p>Wrap up field test and transition to full implementation of STARS.</p> <p>Bring on additional STARS programs, especially in high needs communities.</p>
	<p>Incorporate STARS 1 criteria into licensing rules.</p> <p>Increase monitoring, train on new STARS standards.</p> <p>Conduct parent/provider focus groups to refine message and implement marketing tasks.</p> <p>Montana's Board of Public Education adopts new assurance and accreditation standards for public preschools</p> <p>Support public preschool programs in meeting assurance standards.</p> <p>Investigate how Part C partners with child care to use Routines Based Early Intervention.</p> <p>Launch STARS communication plan.</p> <p>Update STARS criteria based on identified gaps and information from field test.</p> <p>Pilot contract for slot concept with STAR 4 & 5 facilities serving identified high needs children.</p> <p>Begin validation study.</p> <p>Continue to support STARS facilities in their continuous quality improvement.</p> <p>Bring on additional STARS programs, especially in high needs communities.</p>
	<p>Implement a pilot indicator project for licensing to address high quality programs that consistently meet basic licensing standards.</p> <p>Build on Part C RBEI partnerships with child care providers.</p> <p>Continue to support public preschool programs.</p> <p>Outreach to parents, Part C, Home Visiting, and CPS to choose STAR quality facilities. Continue validation study.</p>
	<p>Update transparent web portal to help parents make informed decisions about child care.</p> <p>Continue to support public preschool programs.</p> <p>Continue STARS to Quality validation study.</p> <p>Continue to support STARS facilities in their continuous quality improvement efforts.</p>

Implementing TQRIS in Publicly Funded Early Learning and Development Programs

(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in such a system, including programs in each of the following categories--

- (1) State-funded preschool programs;*
- (2) Early Head Start and Head Start programs*
- (3) Early Learning/Development Programs funded under Part B of IDEA and Part C of IDEA;*
- (4) Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of ESEA; and*
- (5) Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the CCDF program*

The Governor proposed \$2.4 million in state general fund dollars to expand Best Beginnings STARS to Quality in his 2013 biennial budget proposal for FY 14 and FY 15. The Legislature appropriated the full request but used federal CHIPRA bonus payments as the funding source. The total funding available to expand Best Beginnings STARS to Quality will depend on the amount of CHIPRA bonus the State receives. This expansion funding will be used to complete the field test and bring on an increasing number of programs over the next four years, with a priority on programs serving children with high needs.

As the Office of Public Instruction implements public preschool, OPI will work with the Board of Public Education to research, evaluate, and identify applicable Tiered Assurance and Accreditation Standards for Public Preschool based on developmentally appropriate, nationally recognized standards. The categories of standards will align between the two facets of the Montana TQRIS. For all early childhood settings in Montana, early learning standards are a foundation for recognizing what children need to know, understand, and be able to do throughout a developmental continuum for children age 0-5. These Early Learning Standards are already aligned or in process of alignment with the K-3 Common Content Standards. Early Learning Standards are a cornerstone for any TQRIS.

Best Beginnings STARS to Quality is currently available for licensed/registered **Early Head Start** and **Head Start** Programs and 8% of initial field test participants are EHS and HS programs. Part day Head Start programs are not required to be licensed in Montana, but Early Head Start Programs are. At STAR Level 5, Head Start Performance Standards are recognized in place of requirements for NAEYC accreditation. In the coming expansion, HS and EHS programs will be prioritized due to their target population of children with high needs and work will continue to identify reciprocity of applicable Head Start criterion to STARS criterion. *(See Table (B)(2)(c) for detail.)*

Best Beginnings STARS to Quality does not currently include early learning and development programs funded under section 619 of **Part B of IDEA** and **Part C of IDEA** or programs funded under **Title I** of ESEA. Part B and Title I strategies for inclusion will mirror the public preschool model whenever possible. Part C and MIECHV Home Visiting programs will also be included through priority placement in STARS facilities. Part C providers will partner with STARS providers for dually enrolled Part C children in Routines Based Early Intervention strategies within the child care setting. *(See Table (B)(2)(c) for detail.)*

Best Beginnings STARS to Quality was first developed for programs receiving **Child Care and Development Funds** to ensure the quality of early education services children receive, but this only applies to those that are licensed/registered providers. *(See Table (B)(2)(c) for detail.)* In Montana, licensing standards apply to programs serving more than 13 children, group home registration standards apply to those serving between seven and 12 children, and family home standard apply to those serve less than six children. STARS does not currently include informal Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers (as they are not licensed/registered.) As the program expands, Montana will evaluate strategies for including a more diverse range of child care providers to ensure that quality gains are across the board. Montana anticipates that Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers are more likely to align with home visiting approaches in supporting children's development and school readiness than a formalized rating scale system.

Making Quality Early Learning Programs More Affordable and Accessible

<i>(b) Implementing effective policies and practices designed to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs</i>

The Early Childhood Services Bureau is sending a survey to existing STARS providers to determine effective recruitment strategies for the expansion of STARS services. Directors of STAR Level 5 programs are committed to mentoring in the early childhood field, so they will play a role in this recruitment effort. Current participants are some of the biggest proponents of the program, such as Mary Bolick, Director of the MSU Day Care Center in Bozeman.

"I have seen improvement programs in our state come and go. STARS is different. It is research based and will forever change Montana's early care and education field by promoting optimal child development and healthy families. Financial

support is critical for sustaining the STARS program that is designed to impact the quality of early care and education systems in Montana.”

Montana takes great pride in having some of the highest monetary incentives for STARS participants. The monetary incentives are a compelling motivator and resource for programs to improve their quality and move through the STAR ratings, as evidenced by the recent STARS field test evaluation: *“Fiscal Incentives may be the single strongest predictor of STAR rating. Fiscal investments reflect incentives that are spent on facility needs. Investments are spread across different operational areas.”*⁶ (See Executive Summary of field test evaluation on page 160 of Appendix.) The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality incentives chart is included in Section (B)(4). It is clear that these incentives are an effective tool for improving the quality of early learning and development programs in Montana and for maintaining, and growing, capacity.

Making quality early learning services affordable for families is a goal in Montana, particularly for families of high needs children. Incentives offer child care providers the opportunity to cover more of their costs through State reimbursement instead of fees, so that is one step in the right direction. Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships for low income families and families of special needs children are also a help, and Montana plans to improve the eligibility and application process to make those scholarships more accessible. (The State recently raised the financial eligibility requirements to include families earning up to 150% of 2012 FPL in the subsidy program.) Copayments for these subsidies are affordable and graduate based on income. (Please see Sliding Fee Scale on page 176 of Attachments.) Incentives for STARS programs also include higher percentages of reimbursement rates at STAR 2-5, as evidenced in the chart in Section B.4. Expanding Home Visiting in rural and other high need areas is another strategy Montana is currently implementing. Finally, implementing public preschool will allow Montana to serve the majority of 4-year-olds, particularly those with high needs, across the state. Montana has a great deal of momentum, with recent support of full-day kindergarten and growing investments in early learning-The Montana Early Learning Challenge will enable the State to continue moving forward.

⁶ Compass Evaluation and Research (2012). Montana STARS to Quality Field Test Phase I Findings.

Goals for Participation in the Montana TQRIS

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by type of Early Learning and Development Program (as listed in (B)(2)(a)(1) through (5) above).

Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System											
Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of programs in the State	<i>Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System</i>									
		Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target -end of calendar year 2015		Target- end of calendar year 2016		Target- end of calendar year 2017	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State-funded preschool <i>Specify: see below</i> Number of state funded preschools	Baseline 0	0	0	0	0	10	100%	15	100%	20	100%
Early Head Start and Head Start ⁷	29	7	24%	19	66%	20	69%	22	76%	29	100%
Programs funded by IDEA, Part C	See below										
Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619	See below										
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	See below										
Programs receiving from CCDF funds/licensed and registered	1,058	105	10%	219	21%	420	40%	845	80%	1,058	100%
Other Programs: MIECHV Home Visiting	See below										
<i>Public Preschool: Montana does not currently have a public funded preschool option outside of preschools funded with special education money. MT's high quality plan includes implementation of public preschool.</i> <i>Head Start/Early Head Start includes Region X Tribal and Region VIII. Targets for growth in Head</i>											

⁷ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of programs in the State	Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System									
		Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target -end of calendar year 2015		Target- end of calendar year 2016		Target- end of calendar year 2017	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<i>Start/Early Head Start provide for 100% of Region VIII programs in 2014, and then gradual growth of the tribal Region X programs through 2017.</i>											
<i>Programs receiving CCDF: If programs are licensed or registered by the State of Montana, they are eligible for CCDF funds. Baseline data is point in time data August 2013. Also, this number duplicates HS/EHS participating in STARS as they are also eligible to receive CCDF funds if licensed/registered. Year 2017. 100% of eligible licensed/registered facilities (meaning not on provisional or probationary licenses).</i>											
<i>DPHHS, working with IDEA Part C will establish an agreement to promote TQRIS. Part C infants and toddlers will be referred into existing high-quality child care programs. Currently, all IDEA Part C programs are home-based, and do not fit within the model outlined in the TQRIS standards; therefore a benchmark of growth in TQRIS may not be applicable. Part C Family Support Specialists using Routines-based Early Intervention will collaborate with child care providers to promote early intervention in the child care setting.</i>											
<i>Part B and Title I- Part B Preschool and Title I are driven by local school districts. As Montana grows its public preschool model, it will include Part B and Title I preschools as part of the high quality plan over the years and would be included in the same process. This is anticipated to occur toward the end of the grant period and beyond.</i>											
<i>MIECHV- Montana does not currently have MIECHV included in its TQRIS, we will be looking at developing and aligning the benchmarks and constructs of the MIECHV and the home visiting evidence based models to a TQRIS framework. Montana anticipates expanding the number of home visiting sites to 24 in 2014. Montana also includes referral from MIECHV programs to high quality child care settings for children who need care; therefore a benchmark of growth in TQRIS may not be applicable.</i>											

(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs. (15 points)

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency; and

(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs (e.g., displaying quality rating information at the program site) and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history (including any health and safety violations) publicly available in formats that are written in plain language, and are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs.

Valid and Reliable Monitoring Tools

(a) Using a valid and reliable tool for monitoring such programs, having trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating the Early Learning and Development Programs with appropriate frequency

Montana's Best Beginnings STARS to Quality currently targets licensed/registered programs.

Thus, programs already maintain the standards and protocols necessary for licensing status. Best Beginnings STARS to Quality builds on these basic requirements and monitoring practices, overseen by DPHHS, through a comprehensive system that includes:

- Collecting or reviewing business records, including insurance certificates and other data to demonstrate a solid business plan and procedures are in place.
- Confirmation of staff credentials, including degree attainment, training attendance, and other records that demonstrate that practitioners and other staff have completed the required certifications and trainings to perform their jobs at the designated quality level.
- On-site visits to ensure the quality of the learning environment is as reported and that all safety precautions are taken to ensure the health and well-being of children. During these site visits, standardized tools are administered that confirm all aspects of the learning environment meet the standards for STAR rating the program is applying for. The following standardized tools are used in this data collection process. All have been proven valid and reliable measures of program quality, either for the quality of the learning environment (in the case of the environmental rating scales) or business practices:
 - Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale Revised (ITERS-R)
 - Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R)
 - Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale Revised (FCCERS-R).

- Business Administration Scale (BAS) for Family and Group facilities
- Program Administration Scale (PAS) for Centers.⁸

The state has certified assessors that are contracted through the University of Montana-Western to conduct baseline assessments at program entry and then for programs applying for STAR 3-5. Baseline assessments are conducted through the Environmental Rating Scales. Programs achieving STAR 3, STAR 4, and STAR 5 are assessed in the appropriate Environment Rating Scale and either the Business Administration Scale (BAS) for family and group child care or Program Administration Scale (PAS) for center programs. The required scores increase based on the higher STAR level.

STARS assessors are qualified by having achieved reliability and consistency in scale interpretation for completing assessments, as determined by the State of Montana in accordance with the Rating Scale authors. Montana provides paid training opportunities for contracted assessors to achieve reliability by instruction and by performing no less than four supervised reliability training assessments. If the State determines an assessor has not achieved reliability after having performed the supervised reliability training assessments, the assessor will not be allowed to conduct assessments under contract. Once reliability has been achieved, the assessors will continue to have their reliability checked at least every 10th assessment using each scale. For an assessor to be considered reliable they must score an 85% during the reliability check. Assessors may not conduct assessments or perform assessments if an actual or perceived conflict of interest exists. When observing a facility, the assessments are not considered valid unless:

- All the indicators are scored before leaving the facility
- The assessment is well documented
- A caregiver interview is completed
- A report is created and submitted to the State within two days of the assessment.

Assessors must maintain confidentiality, with the exception of mandatory reporting laws.

In addition to these program quality monitoring tools, Montana will move to adopt the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3™) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social and Emotional (ASQ:SE) as standardized child assessment measures in the near future for all STAR 4 programs. These tools will enable providers to inform their instruction based on individual child

⁸ McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership. *Program Administration Scale*.

needs as well as identify any potential developmental delays or disabilities. These tools will be administered by program staff, but training and coaching will be provided to ensure that the tools are properly administered and that the results are valid and reliable.

Providing Quality Rating Information to Parents and Caregivers

(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history publicly available in formats that are written in plain language, and are easy to understand and use for decision making by families selecting Early Learning and Development Programs and families whose children are enrolled in such programs

Montana currently has a licensing portal in which the public can search and access limited information regarding licensed and registered facilities. Information on the website includes owner and facility name, type of license, and license dates and history as well as inspection and complaint information with approved plan of correction. Montana anticipates creating more transparency related to licensed and registered facilities.

The screenshot shows the Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services website. The header includes the 'mt.gov' logo and the department name. A navigation bar contains links: 'DPHHS Home', 'About Us', 'Contact Us', 'News & Events', 'Programs & Services', 'Vital Records & Statistics', and 'A - Z Index'. The main content area is titled 'Search for Child Care Providers'. It includes a 'Step 1: Enter the search criteria' section with input fields for 'City:', 'Name:', and 'Provider number (PV#):'. Below this is a 'Step 2: Click the [Search] button below' section with a 'Search' button. A note states: 'Note: The child care provider you are searching for may be using a business name.' Further down, there is a section for 'Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R) and Child Care Licensing' which offers useful information for parents seeking regulated child care. It lists several links: 'Selecting quality care', 'Licensing regulations', 'License/Registration history', 'Parenting & child development information', 'Payment assistance options', and 'Referrals to other services for children & families'. A final paragraph explains that CCR&Rs match family needs to services that providers offer, saving time in sorting through unsuitable choices. The footer contains links for 'Privacy & Security', 'Accessibility', 'Contact Webmaster', and 'Search', along with the 'mt.gov' logo and the text 'Montana - Where the Best Begins'.

Best Beginnings STARS to Quality also maintains a public website that provides the name of participating programs and reflects awarded STAR levels. Additionally, through a contract for

child care referral with Family Connections, when a parent requests a referral, programs with STAR levels are indicated. Following is a sample from the Early Childhood Services Bureau website publicizing the STAR ratings of each early learning program in that community.

STARS Levels

Programs participating in STARS can be put on "Hold Status" at anytime for the following reasons; program is working towards meeting required criteria, an appeal in progress, significant staff program or staff changes, pending action from licensing, or at the request of the program.

Those who are participating in this program are listed in the the chart below. Once the participant has achieved a level they will be moved to that list; if they have not achieved a level yet, then they will still be listed under participants.

Each level is listed in alphabetical order by the name of the facility

Participants
STAR 1
STAR 2
STAR 3 Babies and Beyond (Group) - East Helena Constance Care Child Care (Center) - Plentywood FVCC Early Childhood Center (Center) - Kalispell Katerpillar Korner (Group) - Helena Kid Kountry Child Development Center (Center) - Billings Little Dippers (Family) - Missoula Little Folks University (Group) - Miles City Missoula Early Head Start (Center) - Missoula Rocky Mountain Development Council (Center) - Head Start - Helena Small Wonder Child Care (Center) - Lewistown Young Families Early Head Start (Center) - Billings Young Parents' Education Center - Toddler Center (Center) - Great Falls Zetterberg Child Care (Group) - Lolo
STAR 4
STAR 5

Each participating facility also receives a certificate indicating the STAR level achieved for public display along with a sample press release. Certificates are good for one year and must be renewed annually. Programs can apply for the next STAR level quarterly. In addition to these efforts, programs are encouraged, through the *Family and Community Partnerships* category of their STARS rating, to build strong relationships with potential referral sources in their communities and to participate in community activities that promote early learning and literacy, such as local library reading times. These partnerships provide another vehicle for parents to learn more about the program and the services and supports it provides.

(B)(4) Promoting access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs. (20 points)

The extent to which the State and its Participating State Agencies have developed and implemented, or have a High-Quality Plan to develop and implement, a system for improving the quality of the Early Learning and Development Programs participating in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System by--

(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation);

(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services); and

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing--

(1) The number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and

(2) The number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Support and Incentives for Continuous Quality Improvement

(a) Developing and implementing policies and practices that provide support and incentives for Early Learning and Development Programs to continuously improve (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial rewards or incentives, higher subsidy reimbursement rates, compensation)

Montana has many strategies currently in place to support continuous quality improvement of early learning programs. Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies provide technical assistance, as well as some coaching and training to early learning programs pursuing STARS rating. This support is provided free of charge and designed to assist programs in successfully completing the application process, developing improvement plans, and advancing to higher STAR levels by executing their improvement plans. Quality Improvement Plans are required for all programs in the STARS system, creating a road map to progress to higher standards.

In addition, Best Beginnings STARS to Quality also offers trainings on statewide topics of interest that contribute to quality improvement, including the Pyramid Model to help practitioners improve child social and emotional development and develop positive approaches to addressing challenging behaviors. These trainings are frequently conducted by early childhood experts that serve on or work closely with the Best Beginnings Advisory Council. Of particular note is the Early Childhood Project, based out of Montana State University. ECP has a broad reaching scope that includes not only training but development of initiatives, materials and approaches that impact workforce development in early learning statewide. ECP has played a pivotal role in developing Montana's Core Knowledge and Competency Framework (The

Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base), which is a guide to what practitioners need to know, understand and be able to do to promote positive growth, development and learning in the early years. Montana's framework is aligned with NAEYC and National Association for Family Child Care accreditation standards, Head Start Framework and Program Administration and Business Administration Scales used in Montana's STARS to Quality program. ECP has also taken the lead in outlining a Career Path and framework for early childhood practitioners from entry level through graduate degrees. Other efforts ECP has been integrally involved in include updating Montana's Early Learning Standards, developing a STARS coaching model and establishing a Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship program. Professional development is woven into the STARS framework and is an integral part of the progression through the STARS levels. The training supports in place from CCR&R, ECP, and the STARS Program Specialist complement the increased financial incentives that are also a part of STARS.

In addition to a host of training supports, Montana also offers financial incentives to programs based on their progression through the STARS rating system. Below is a chart of quarterly incentives offered to providers based on the STAR level they achieve.

STARS Incentives (Quarterly)					
Level	Family 6 - Licensed Capacity	Group 12- Licensed Capacity	Small Center 13-29- Licensed Capacity	Medium Center 30-59 - Licensed Capacity	Large Center 60+ - Licensed Capacity
1 STAR	Beginner STAR Kit, Resources, Help and Support				
2 STAR	\$625	\$875	\$1250	\$1625	\$2063
	5% increased reimbursement for Best Beginnings Scholarships				
3 STAR	\$938	\$1375	\$1875	\$2500	\$3125
	10% increased reimbursement for Best Beginnings Scholarships				
4 STAR	\$1250	\$1875	\$2500	\$3375	\$4063
	15% increased reimbursement for Best Beginnings Scholarships				
5 STAR	\$1563	\$2250	\$3125	\$4250	\$5000
	20% increased reimbursement for Best Beginnings Scholarships				

Assisting Working Families of High Needs Children Access Quality Programs.

(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs (e.g., providing full-day, full-year programs; transportation; meals; family support services)

Children with high needs are a priority for the Montana Early Learning Challenge and many of the strategies proposed will assist those with working parents in gaining access to high quality programs. Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are available to families of high needs children ages 0 to 12 or older if a special needs child, and Montana's 2013 legislature increased income caps to ensure that low-income working families have access to full day early learning programs for their children. Families receiving scholarships must use licensed, registered or legally certified child care (family friend and neighbor), ensuring that their children receive at least a standardized quality of care. For children with special needs, Special Needs Subsidies are available to supplement these scholarships and ensure that the child care provider has the extra supports they may need to prepare them to address the individual needs of that child. STARS programs at levels 2-5 are eligible for increased reimbursement payments for the Best Beginnings Scholarship Program. Part of Montana's plan is to identify other eligibility policy decisions to assure continuity of care for high needs children in high quality settings.

OPI supports preschool programs for children with high needs. Each school district conducts preschool screenings annually and the Part B program works closely with the Part C program (described below) to facilitate effective transitions for children with disabilities when they reach the age of three. Title I Preschool Programs are also operated at the individual district or school level. These programs are available in high needs communities and are open to working families.

Head Start and Early Head Start play a critical role in serving low-income children and children with developmental delays or disabilities in Montana. There are currently nine Early Head Start and 20 Head Start programs in the State, ten of which are located in tribal communities. Though only some of these programs offer full-day, full-year care to support families working full-time, they all meet Head Start Performance Standards and can support families working part time. Best Beginnings STARS to Quality is currently available for licensed/registered Early Head Start and Head Start Programs. Montana plans to include all Head Start/Early Head Start programs in the STARS program.

Montana is committed to continuing to improve family engagement throughout the early learning continuum. Best Beginnings STARS to Quality includes a standards category for *Family and Community Partnerships*. Training is offered to providers on effective family engagement strategies used effectively by some programs, such as involving families in setting educational goals for their child, conducting home-based conferences and inviting families to center events and in the classroom. These strategies will continue to be employed to ensure that families have the support they need and their children can be enrolled in high quality care. Included in Montana's high quality plan, Part C providers, MIECHV home visitors and Child Protective Services will begin to refer children in their system who need child care to STAR 3-5 facilities to support families of high needs children in high quality care.

Ambitious Goals for Increasing Top Tier Programs and Child Enrollment

(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing

The following table demonstrates Montana's commitment to the Early Learning Challenge and ensuring that children with high needs are increasingly enrolled in high quality early learning programs that will improve their kindergarten readiness and chances of school success.

Performance Measure for (B)(4)(c)(1): Increasing the number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.					
	Baseline (Today)	Target- end of calendar year 2014	Target- end of calendar year 2015	Target- end of calendar year 2016	Target- end of calendar year 2017
Total number of programs covered by the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	105	219	420	845	1,058
No Tier/Star level yet	47	11	21	42	53
Number of programs in Tier 1/Star 1	8	149	213	436	267
Number of programs in Tier 2/Star 2	36	25	139	245	490
Number of programs in Tier 3/Star 3	13	30	40	106	220

Number of programs in Tier 4/Star 4	1	2	5	13	22
Number of programs in Tier 5/Star 5	2	2	2	3	6*

Baseline is actual participation in STARS 10/2013

This table reflects growth projections for only licensed/registered/Head Start/Early Head Start Facilities, public preschool is not included as standards have not been identified yet.

The baseline data included in the chart are actual data that reflect the current participation in the STARS program and the distribution among the star levels. The baseline data were collected as a part of the STARS evaluation. The targets for each calendar year were calculated based on evaluation data reflecting how quickly programs advance through the tiers. The number of programs in STARS will gradually be increased from 2014 through 2017.

The 47 programs that have no stars in the baseline year will all have achieved Tier 1 in 2014. These 47 programs will all fit into Tier 1 by 2014 because of a change in the STARS standards. The Tier 1 standards will be changed by 2014 to allow all Head Start agencies to automatically fall into Tier 1.

Starting in 2014, 5% of the new programs are expected to have no stars when they enter the quality rating system. This proportion is expected to hold true of all program newly covered by the STARS through 2017. All programs that enter the program at the “No Star level” are expected to achieve Star 1 level within a year.

Among the programs at Tier 1 level, 85% are expected to move to Tier 2 over a year’s time, while 15% will remain in Tier 1. Among programs in Tier 2, 50% progress to Tier 3 during a year and 50% remain in Tier 2. Among Tier 3 programs, 20% will move to Tier 4 during a Year, while 80% will remain in Tier 3. Among Tier 4 programs, only 15% are expected to achieve Tier 5, the most stringent quality rating system level. 85% of Tier 4 programs will remain at that level.

Eventually, when the majority of programs are covered by STARS and have been involved for several years, the distribution of all programs is expected to be: 5% in no tier, 30% in Tier 1, 30% in Tier 2, 20% in Tier 3, 10% in Tier 4, and 5% in Tier 5.

**Montana anticipates that with inclusion of all Head Start/Early Head Start Programs in STARS, based on reciprocity with Head Start Performance Standards at Star 4 and 5, these numbers may inflate more quickly at Star 4 and 5 in Year 2016 and 2017.*

Performance Measures for (B)(4)(c)(2): Increasing the number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percent of Children with High Needs Participating in Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System									
		Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target -end of calendar year 2015		Target- end of calendar year 2016		Target- end of calendar year 2017	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State-funded preschool <i>Specify:</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1,000	100%	1,500	100%	2,000	100%
Early Head Start and Head Start ⁹	5,472	668	13%	1,368	25%	2,736	50%	4,104	75%	5,472	100%
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part C	728										
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619	1,698										
Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	965										
Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program Baseline is expressed as children served in top tiers of the STARS to Quality program, which is a % of the total children served through CCDF funding (6,125).	6,125	110	2%	306	5%	919	15%	1,225	20%	1,531	25%
Other: MIECHV Home Visiting	137										
NOTE: "Top Tiers" defined as three through five in Montana's TQRIS (Best Beginnings STARS to Quality)											

⁹ Including Migrant and Tribal Head Start located in the State.

Performance Measures for (B)(4)(c)(2): Increasing the number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percent of Children with High Needs Participating in Programs that are in the top tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System									
		Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target -end of calendar year 2015		Target- end of calendar year 2016		Target- end of calendar year 2017	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%

Additional notes:

Montana does not currently have a public funded preschool option, outside of preschool funded with special education funds.

Head Start and Early Head Start data, including Tribal Head Start, is from the 2013 PIR. Baseline is a cumulative of the participating Head Start and Early Head Start in the Montana TQRIS (STARS to Quality Program), and is inclusive of all STAR levels.

DPHHS, working with IDEA Part C will establish an agreement to promote TQRIS. Part C infants and toddlers will be referred into existing high-quality child care programs. Currently, all IDEA Part C programs are home-based, and do not fit within the model outlined in the TQRIS standards; therefore a benchmark of growth in TQRIS may not be applicable. Part C Family Support Specialists using Routines-based Early Intervention will collaborate with child care providers to promote early intervention in the child care setting.

Part B and Title I- Part B Preschool and Title I are driven by local school districts. As Montana grows its public preschool model, it will include Part B and Title I preschools as part of the high quality plan over the years and would be included in the same process. This is anticipated to occur toward the end of the grant period and beyond.

CCDF: For Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program, the baseline is expressed as a percentage of children receiving CCDF funds, who are also served in the top tiers of the STARS to Quality program.

MIECHV- Montana does not currently have MIECHV included in its TQRIS, we will be looking at developing and aligning the benchmarks and constructs of the MIECHV and the home visiting evidence based models to a TQRIS framework. Montana anticipates expanding the number of home visiting sites to 24 in 2014. Montana also includes referral from MIECHV programs to high quality child care settings for children who need care; therefore a benchmark of growth in TQRIS may not be applicable. The data for the Maternal and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program represents the first year of program enrollment and participation for most sites. The program enrolls women during pregnancy and young children. Although most child participants are under age 2, programs may serve children through kindergarten entry.

(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems.

(15 points)

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to design and implement evaluations--working with an independent evaluator and, when warranted, as part of a cross-State evaluation consortium--of the relationship between the ratings generated by the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and the learning outcomes of children served by the State's Early Learning and Development Programs by--

(a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), that the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality; and

(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.

Validating Best Beginnings STARS to Quality for Program Effectiveness

(a) Validating, using research-based measures, as described in the State Plan (which also describes the criteria that the State used or will use to determine those measures), that the tiers in the State's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality

Montana is in the process of implementing a field test to determine if Best Beginnings STARS to Quality is meeting its intended goal of assessing quality and evaluating progress. The field test is being conducted by Compass Evaluation and Research, with Dr. Sarah Heinemeier as the principal investigator. The field test design provides for essential statewide coverage, as many of the infrastructure supports are statewide and fairness of geographical and facility representation is ensured. Additionally, because of the rural nature of Montana, the design and system needs to work for early childhood programs throughout the state, not just those in larger towns. Phase I of the field test began in 2010, with 78 participating programs located across the state, and concluded in late 2012. Major findings include that the system is effectively moving programs to higher quality levels, with 68% achieving advancement to either a 2- or 3-STAR status. Phase II of the field test is now underway, with 30 additional programs participating. With the goal of implementing Best Beginnings STARS to Quality across the spectrum of licensed or registered child care programs in Montana, the field tests are an important first step in establishing the system's validity.

Initial field test results (Phase I) have proven that the system is effective at improving program quality and advancing programs to higher levels and Montana is now in the process of expanding the field study in Phase II. Several factors were found to facilitate relatively rapid movement through the rating system through Phase I of the field study:

- (1) Commitment to improving staff education. Participating facilities cannot advance unless staff complete the required trainings and, in many cases, advance their education. A facility's

ability to make progress in education and credentials represents a significant commitment by the facility director/owner and participating staff to make time for and invest in ongoing training and coursework.

- (2) Financial support. The commitment to improving and maintaining quality carries a significant financial burden. The availability of incentives and financial support is critical to ensuring participating facilities have an adequately prepared staff.
- (3) Low turnover. Relatively low rates of turnover among staff allow facilities to maintain a course of improvement. As the STARS to Quality initiative moves forward, facilities and their support team(s) will have to strategize how to maintain these staff, especially staff that have achieved degrees and credentials. This is an area in which incentives (or other forms of financial support) may play a defining role: facilities that provide benefits and competitive compensation packages may experience lower turnover of their most experienced and educated staff.
- (4) Coaching. The coaches establish a personal relationship with participating facilities and help facilities strategize and invest in quality improvements. This personal relationship, which involves on-site visits and technical assistance at participating facilities (and is a significant investment by coaches), can be a critical factor in motivating and assisting an individual facility to make progress on its improvement plan.

Validating Best Beginnings STARS to Quality for Impact on Child Outcomes

<i>(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness.</i>
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Now it is time to evaluate the effect these quality improvements have on child outcomes.

Montana is proposing to conduct a validation study of the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program through the Montana Early Learning Challenge.

Studies conducted in other states captured child outcomes for sites participating in the QRIS but did not use experimental or quasi-experimental approaches to examine the causal relationship between quality, star rating, and child outcomes. Montana will overcome that limitation by working with an independent evaluation firm and increasing the rigor of the evaluation design to the degree that some causal relationship can be shown. In this way, the State will begin to examine the unique contributions of its STARS to Quality initiative by incorporating sites that

are not participating in either Phase I or II of the pilot test as comparison sites in the proposed study.

Following Lispcomb and Maxwell (2013), Tout et.al. (2013), and Tout and Starr (2013)¹⁰, Montana's STARS validation study will identify and address critical elements in each of the following sections:

- QRIS context and status
- Engaging QRIS stakeholders in the process
- QRIS data infrastructure
- Planning validation research questions and approach
- Selecting data collection and analytic approach
- Dissemination of findings to stakeholders

The validation study is planned as one component of both the ongoing evaluation of the initiative and as a component of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC). Mandated criteria from the RTT-ELC include an examination of the extent to which the STARS rating scheme can differentiate quality and the extent to which there are positive child outcomes associated with higher star ratings.

The STARS evaluation design process included consultations with early childhood system and QRIS experts including the Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council, Montana Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Montana Child Care Association, Montana Association for the Education of Young Children, Montana Head Start Association, Montana child care providers, staff from Montana's Early Childhood Services Bureau and Montana's Early Childhood Project, parents of young children, and many others. As a result of consultations and design meetings, the team designed a system that incorporates multiple quality measures across five domains.

The STARS's validation study will further assess the ability of STARS measures to determine and differentiate quality by deploying additional measures of classroom and teacher quality (e.g., the CLASS) and analyzing whether or not the disparate measures converge on similar findings regarding quality. In addition, the validation study will include child developmental outcomes

¹⁰ Tout, K. and Starr, R. (2013). *Key Elements of a QRIS Validation Plan: Guidance and Planning Template*. OPRE 2013-11. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

and determine the extent to which advancements in star rating and the underlying components of star rating contribute to improved or heightened child outcomes. This aspect of the study requires recruitment of children from participating sites and the administration of several developmental assessments, to address child progress across domains such as language and pre-literacy skills, social-emotional development, cognition, approaches to learning and resilience, and health and physical development.

Multiple STARS stakeholders will be engaged in the final design, implementation, and ongoing review of the validation study. A select time-limited subcommittee of the Best Beginnings Advisory Council, the Validation Advisory Committee, will be established to oversee the project. The primary means of engaging stakeholders will include:

- Convening of the Best Beginnings Advisory Council of varied technical experts, Early Childhood Education researchers, and STARS system staff.
- Engagement by the current evaluation's study team in ongoing oversight and feedback.
- Dissemination of draft (interim and final) findings for review, feedback, and discussion.
- Participation in cross-state discussion and issue groups.

The study team will employ independent data collectors, based in Montana/CCRR regions. The independent team will have no affiliation with STARS, limiting the potential for bias when conducting assessments. Team members will be trained in the study's overall goals, methods, and approaches, and will achieve high reliability in all standardized assessments (using methods recommended by each assessment's publisher).

Team members will be supervised and managed by one project coordinator located in Montana. The project coordinator will be responsible for managing the daily requirements of recruiting, enrolling, and scheduling. The coordinator also will be responsible for recruiting, ensuring the training of, scheduling, and debriefing of all data collection team members. The project coordinator will identify a team leader in each CCRR region who will take responsibility for trouble-shooting site-level questions and challenges, and assuring ongoing, high-levels, of reliability and data security.

The evaluation will examine the nature and scope of data available through existing systems and make recommendations for expanding or broadening system data such that (a) participating

facilities have access to data for making program improvements, (b) coaches and mentors have access to data on site status, progress, needs, and challenges, and (c) system staff have access to data on site status, progress, and outcomes, and initiative costs, benefits, return on investment, and system resilience. The validation study will generate new data in the form of quality assessment scale scores (e.g., CLASS scores) and outcome measures (e.g., direct child assessments) as well as stakeholder (coach, Early Childhood-system practitioners and educators, provider/teacher, and parent) feedback on the importance and value of star rating domains and criteria. The following table outlines the new data proposed for the validation study.

New Data generated for the Validation Study

Data Elements	Data Source
Teacher:child interactions	CLASS
Classroom quality	TBD
Instructional quality	TBD
Teacher feedback	Teacher surveys and interviews
Parent ratings of quality	Parent surveys and interviews
Child outcome assessments	Language/Vocabulary Skills: Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test--IV Social-emotional Skills: Social Skills Improvement System Health and Physical Development: parent survey of overall child health Pre-Literacy Skills: General Cognition: Approaches to Learning/ Resilience:
Child participation data	Student attendance tracking sheets
Parent engagement and participation data	Parent engagement tracking sheets

The study will incorporate direct child evaluation as well as data collection from parents and teachers, and observations of classrooms. The study's design team will submit the study plan for Institutional Review Board (IRB¹¹) approval, in concert with submission to the Validation Advisory Committee. Feedback from both the Validation Advisory Committee and the IRB will be used to finalize the study's design. The study team does not anticipate any human subjects protections issues or challenges, as the study design only calls for child assessment and not for manipulation of the child's environment.

The greatest foreseeable challenge is low response to validation study recruitment efforts, among both facilities and parent of enrolled children. The study team will attempt to forestall these challenges by providing meaningful incentives, such as \$250 in supplies for participating facilities and \$50 gift cards for participating families at each data assessment event. Allowing sufficient recruitment time and ongoing information about the study are additional means of forestalling recruitment challenges. Another foreseeable challenge in Montana is weather, distance or isolation of some facilities, and the timing of data collections. Assessments will be timed to avoid predictable weather challenges, namely snow and inclement winter weather, however, it may be impossible to predict all such events, which may cause delays in data collection.

The plan should clearly connect the work of the validation study with any reporting requirements. These may include performance measures for a Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant, the Quality Performance Report, state- or program-level performance management indicators or other required internal or external reports.

¹¹ IRB services will be facilitated by the validation study team, by contract with either university or private services.

FOCUSED INVESTMENT AREA C - Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards. (20 points)

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to put in place high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards that are used statewide by Early Learning and Development Programs and that--

(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;

(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;

(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and that they are shared with parents and families along with suggestions for appropriate strategies they can use at home to support their children's learning and development; and

(d) Includes evidence that State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs.

A common set of statewide early learning standards have served as a key foundation in Montana's implementation of a comprehensive early learning system. Montana's *Early Learning Guidelines for Young Children* ages 3- 5 (published in 2004) and the *Infant and Toddler Early Learning Guidelines* (2009) have recently undergone an extensive revision.

The new **Montana Early Learning Standards** (*abridged version found on page 32 of the Appendix*), published in 2013, are a source document that guides the work of early childhood professionals to ensure that children from birth to age five have the skills and knowledge they need to achieve success in learning to reach their full potential in life. The Montana Early Learning Standards can be defined as broad categories or dimensions reflective of children's learning and development, providing a *continuum* of benchmarks and indicators *without listing specific ages*. Therefore, each child's development can be identified and observed over time on the continuum. The document reflects current research, particularly in the areas of brain development, the effects of traumatic stress, and cultural and linguistic diversity, including significant and meaningful inclusions of Montana Indian Education for All (IEFA) resources.

The Standards were reviewed and modified by a task force of early childhood leaders and experts from across the State, including higher education, the Montana Early Childhood Project, Child Care Plus (inclusion experts), Montana Office of Public Instruction, Head Start Collaboration Office, Head Start representatives, Resource and Referral Agencies, and Preschool

Directors. Montana’s plan is to establish a review process of the ELS every five years to ensure new research findings inform the ELS, to then inform best practices for working with children and establishing curriculum goals.

MT Early Learning Standards – Developmental, Cultural and Linguistic Appropriateness

(a) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and that they cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness;

Montana has adopted the guiding principle that *“respect and appreciation for children’s heritage and the diverse cultures they operate within are a valuable and important part of their development. The Guidelines reinforce health partnerships between families and other caregivers to ensure optimal support for young children. All children have the right to expect that their home, community, and family lives will be respected in the early care and education setting. Children’s home language with their families must be respected as the basis for learning a second language. It is recognized by the National Education Goals Panel, based on research that a child’s learning is complex and is influenced by cultural and contextual factors.”*¹

Cultural relevance is not only its own set of standards within the ELS, but is imbedded throughout the document as it reflects who the child is within the context of their family and community. Taken from the Montana Early Learning Standards, the following standard demonstrates inclusion of cultural and linguistic appropriateness.

Standard 1: Culture, Family, and Community

“As children interact with their families and communities, they develop a feeling of belonging, become knowledgeable about their culture, and develop an appreciation and understanding about diverse cultures. This family, cultural, and community awareness leads to an appreciation for diversity and builds skills for interacting effectively with others. Culture may be broadly defined as the quality in a person or society that is based on shared behaviors, beliefs, traditions, and values.”

In addition, the Early Learning Standards align with the Essential Domains of School Readiness and the Montana Common Core Standards for Kindergarten through 3rd Grade in literacy and mathematics. The Table below illustrates the alignment of Early Learning Standards with the state academic K-3 Standards and the Essential Domains of School Readiness.

¹ National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1997)

Essential Domains of School Readiness	MT Common Core Standards for Kindergarten – 3rd Grade EC & Education Knowledge Base	Montana Early Learning Standards Birth to age 5
Physical Development and Health	Alignment not Completed	Core Domain 2 – Physical Physical Development Health, Safety, and Personal Care
Social and Emotional Development	Alignment not Completed	Core Domain 1 – Emotional/Social Culture, Family, and Community Emotional Development Social Development
Approaches to Learning	Alignment not Completed	Core Domain 4 – Cognition Approaches to Learning Reasoning/Representational Thought Creative Arts
Cognitive Development and General Knowledge	Mathematical Practice & Content History/Social Studies Science Specifically: Counting and Cardinality Kindergarten: K.KC.1 Measurement and Data Kindergarten: K.MD.1, K.MD.2, K.MD.3 Operations and Mathematical Thinking Kindergarten: K.OA.1, K.OA.2 Geometry Kindergarten: K.G.1, K.G.2, K.G.4, K.G.5	Core Domain 4 – Cognition Mathematics and Numeracy Science Social Studies
Language, Communications and Literacy	English Language Arts Specifically: Reading Foundational Skills: Print Concepts 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d Reading Foundational Skills :Phonemic Awareness 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d Reading Literature: RL.1, RL.2, RL.3, RL.9, RL.10 Writing W.2, @W.3	Core Domain 3 - Communication Communication and Language Development Literacy

The ELS are structured to promote and accommodate the individual needs of all children, including those with disabilities. While the standards are presented and organized by developmental domains, it is important to note that each domain is related to and influences the other domains in children's growth and development. Growth and development occur not as a series of isolated events throughout the first years of life, meaning sometimes growth in one domain will necessitate a pause, or regression in another area.

Aligned with Montana K – 3 Academic Standards

(b) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in, at a minimum, early literacy and mathematics;

Montana recognizes that children are successful when the knowledge and experiences they gain at one age build upon the learning and experiences that came before. Based on this

understanding, intentional alignment between the benchmark in the ELS and the Montana Common Core Standards for K-3 was a priority during the revision process. Please refer to the table in Section (C)(1) (a) for a complete picture of this alignment of the alignment that has thus far been completed. The following areas have not yet been aligned:

- Physical and health
- Social and emotional development, and
- Approaches to learning.

Part of Montana's high quality plan is to complete alignment on these school readiness domains.

ELS in Program Standards, Curricula, and Assessment and Shared with Parents

(c) Includes evidence that the Early Learning and Development Standards are incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities; and that they are shared with parents and families along with suggestions for appropriate strategies they can use at home to support their children's learning and development

Early Learning Standards are incorporated in Montana's Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program, beginning at STAR 2 and then at STAR 4, which requires a written curriculum plan aligned with ELS. *(See STARS to Quality Rating Scale on page 156 in the Appendix.)* The Comprehensive Assessment Systems for program indicators focus on Environment Rating Scales for Infants through Preschoolers, and home child care. STARS programs are coached on how to refer to the ELS when designing classroom environments in accord with the Comprehensive Assessment Systems. At the child level, Montana will include developmental screenings using ASQ-3™ and ASQ: SE, which is also based on child development milestones.

Montana's leader in professional development for early childhood, the Early Childhood Project (ECP), sponsored the revision of ELS and also is home to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, the Knowledge Base. ECP will be developing a training series on ELS for inclusion in the STARS training requirements and cross sector. Additionally, as ECP oversees training approval for Montana's ECE workforce, ELS and Knowledge Base content areas will be required to be included in any training event.

Montana intends for Early Learning Standards to be used not only by professionals but to support families in understanding developmental expectations. Montana's high quality plan

includes building on the updated ELS and developing new activity kits for use by families, based on the successful family literacy kits developed through OPI's Early Reading First and Striving Readers Initiatives.

Understanding of and Commitment to Montana ELS across Early Learning Programs

(d) Includes evidence that State has supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the Early Learning and Development Standards across Early Learning and Development Programs

Montana's high quality plan, with the newly revised ELS, includes cross sector adoption, shared training, and promotion with families and early childhood professionals within each sector. Public preschools will include ELS as part of the TQRIS Assurance Standards for Preschools, and will use ELS to inform curriculum and individual needs of children in the classroom. Home visitors can use family activity kits, once developed, to support developmentally appropriate activities in parent child interactions and fostering positive relationships.

Early Learning Standards – Goals, Objectives and Action Plan

Statewide High Quality Early Learning and Development Standards: <i>Build strong alignment between Montana's Early Learning Standards, K-3 academic standards, and Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.</i>	
Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build on initial alignment process of ELS and Kindergarten Common Core Standards to create a cross walk document for use by early childhood practitioners. 2. Develop and promote ELS training to demonstrate how they should be used to inform curriculum, child assessment, and early learning environments cross sector. 3. Assure access to, and inclusion of, families and parents in the use of the standards. 	Outcomes by the end of the grant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% STAR 3 programs and public preschools are trained on aligned standards. • 100% STAR 4 programs actively use Early Learning Standards to inform curriculum and meet the needs of individual children. • Complete alignment of the ELS and Essential Domains of School Readiness with OPI's standards in the three remaining areas (Physical Development and Health, Social and Emotional Development, and Approaches to Learning) • Parents and families are informed and engaged in the use of the Early Learning Standards
Action Plan	
2014	Create cross walk document demonstrating alignment and disseminate to professional development providers Develop communication plan to inform early childhood educators of 4-year strategic plan on ELS Create training on ELS

2015	<p>Begin delivering training on ELS with prioritization to STARS programs and public preschool</p> <p>Higher education programs use ELS in their syllabi</p> <p>Include ELS requirement in approved training application process</p> <p>Include information sharing and activities for families and parents, modeling OPI's family literacy kits</p>
	<p>Continue delivering training on ELS</p> <p>Assure STARS coaches are supporting programs in application of ELS for curriculum planning</p> <p>Include information sharing and activities for families and parents</p>
	<p>Continue delivering training on ELS</p> <p>Continue supporting programs</p> <p>Include information sharing and activities for families and parents</p>

(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness. (20 points)

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs by--

(a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards; and involving families as partners and building parents' capacity to promote their children's physical, social, and emotional health;

(b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an ongoing basis in meeting the health standards;

(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity, and providing information and guidance to families to promote healthy habits at home;

(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who—

(1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit (see section 1905(r)(5) of the Social Security Act) or the well-baby and well-child services available through the Children's Health Insurance Program (42 CFR 457.520), and that, as appropriate, are consistent with the Child Find provisions in IDEA (see sections 612(a)(3) and 635(a)(5) of IDEA);

(2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and, where appropriate, received follow-up; and

(3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care; and

(e) Developing a comprehensive approach to increase the capacity and improve the overall quality of Early Learning and Development Programs to support and address the social and emotional development (including infant-early childhood mental health) of children from birth to age five.

Ensuring Children's Health and Safety

(a) Establishing a progression of standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of its Program Standards; and involving families as partners and building parents' capacity to promote their children's physical, social, and emotional health;

The Montana Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program is tied to health and developmental standards, as well as family engagement and physical activity expectations for early childhood settings. All participants in STARS receive training on the Early Learning Standards and are assessed on their utilization of health, safety and physical activity practices. The utilization of effective family engagement strategies also helps determine program quality and progression within the STARS rating scale. Some of the indicators of quality specific to health include promoting breast feeding, family style eating, and instituting health and wellness policies for children, staff, and families. As Montana moves to adopt the ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE as common screening tools for STARS, Head Start/Early Head Start, Part C, and public preschools, the health and well-being of infants, toddlers and young children with high needs will be easier to monitor and address.

In particular, Montana is committed to ensuring that the needs of children with special health care issues or disabilities are met. As part of its high quality plan, Montana will work toward a statewide, consistent and coordinated approach to Child Find throughout its communities. This includes not only identification, but also coordination of follow-up services needed for children with high needs. Currently, Child Find is unique to the community, is not always comprehensive, and limited data exists related to referral, family support, and follow up. Other programs working with children will benefit from this streamlining of services and follow-up care even if the child does not qualify for Part C services.

Training Early Childhood Practitioners on the Health Standards

b) Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators who are trained and supported on an ongoing basis in meeting the health standards;

Through Montana's Early Childhood Project, an early childhood training approval system exists. Approved trainings are categorized according to the Montana Competency Framework as the Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base. In the Knowledge Base areas of Health and Well-being and Child Growth and Development, 588 courses were offered in 2012.

In addition, the STARS matrix has specific requirements for professional development around health standards and expectations. All STARS providers are supported through ongoing coaching and technical assistance targeting goal achievement within the STARS matrix. As part of the infrastructure to support STARS programs, Montana has contracted to provide health consultation. This function not only develops and delivers health promotion training, but provides technical assistance to individual programs. Montana is currently expanding the number of trained health consultants through Best Beginnings community coalitions. Child Care Licensing also provides basic health and safety expectations.

Promoting Healthy Eating Habits and Physical Activity

c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity, and providing information and guidance to families to promote healthy habits at home;

In the STARS program, nutrition and physical activity indicators are aligned throughout the five star system, including participation in the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program at STAR 2, promoting breast feeding, family style eating, and addressing health and wellness policies for children, staff, and families at STAR 5. In addition, NAEYC Accreditation and Head Start

Performance Standards are recognized, which also include nutrition and physical activity strategies.

Montana's Best Beginnings Advisory Council Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan also identifies Nutrition and Physical Activity Guidelines in early childhood settings, which aligns with the Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program (NAPA) strategic plan. The Montana NAPA is housed within the Department of Public Health and Human Services. Activities outlined in the NAPA State Plan focus on achieving the following goals:

1. Increasing Physical Activity
2. Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Consumption
3. Promoting Caloric Balance
4. Increasing Breastfeeding of Infants

Recently, the NAPA program has expanded its approach to increase collaboration with early childhood. Basic strategies are to promote the adoption of Food and Beverage and Physical Activity guidelines in programs, along with the presence of physical activity in child care and Head Start facilities. NAPA is working with Head Start and child care to increase trainings on “*I Am Moving, I Am Learning*”, a curriculum that addresses these topics. (Source: Montana NAPA program <http://mtnapa.com/2013>).

MIECHV also provides information and guidance to families to promote healthy habits at home through its home visiting model. Additionally, through WIC, families participate in education and receive guidance on nutritional best practices for families.

Screening and Follow Up Services for Children with High Needs

(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number of Children with High Needs who

- (1) Are screened using Screening Measures that align with the Medicaid Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment benefit or the well-baby and well-child services*
- (2) Are referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and, where appropriate, received follow-up; and*
- (3) Participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well-child care, including the number of children who are up to date in a schedule of well-child care*

Throughout Montana's system, screening tools are utilized; however, there is little coordination among sectors regarding use of common screening tools and gaps in referrals and follow up exist. Montana has identified the ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE as a cost effective, evidence based, age

appropriate tool for infants, toddlers and young children that also includes family involvement. MIECHV has adopted ASQ-3™ and ASQ: SE and has already provided training throughout the State for home visitors. This tool has also been used in some Head Start/Early Head Start programs, pediatric clinics, Child Finds, and early childhood programs. Montana has included coordinated implementation of this tool as a major component of the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality expansion and the development of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment strategy. Utilizing this tool as a common screening cross sector will allow Montana to better meet the health and behavioral benchmarks for children with high needs.

Through the Healthy Montana Kids Program, Early, Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) is a comprehensive benefit package for all enrolled children. Adoption of the ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE by Healthy Montana Kids providers would contribute to Montana's high quality plan. A critical assumption and component is to allow for the sharing of screening results across agencies that may all be working with the same child.

Supporting Social and Emotional Development

<i>(e) Developing a comprehensive approach to increase the capacity and improve the overall quality of Early Learning and Development Programs to support and address the social and emotional development (including infant-early childhood mental health) of children from birth to age five</i>
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As part of the infrastructure to support children and families, the Best Beginnings Advisory Council Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Committee has identified the Pyramid Model to support children's social and emotional development. The Pyramid Model focuses on promotion, prevention, and intervention, applicable for adults working with infants through the school years. Training and implementation of the Pyramid Model for Social Emotional Health is included through Montana's STARS and coaching is available to support implementation. In the public school setting, OPI is utilizing Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI), a proactive approach for creating positive behavior supports and a social culture that establishes social, emotional, and academic success for all students, supporting implementation of the Pyramid Model.

For children who need intensive intervention and support services, the Children's Mental Health Bureau in DPHHS is working with outpatient therapists in utilizing evidence based therapy modalities and the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Information and Integration tool (CANS). In Montana, CANS is designed to address youth, birth to age 21, and provides assessment information to assist in determining the best treatment approach. Montana has

amended rules to include the under 5 population in publicly funded preschools and is beginning to bring Home Support Services into private preschool and child care environments. Parent(s) are required to be part of the treatment planning process in Medicaid-funded mental health support. Montana has developed a seven year strategic plan to provide Parent Child Interaction Therapy professional development. And, through recent emphasis on the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study, Montana is now focusing on training cross sector on ACEs and is looking to provide greater emphasis on trauma informed practices.

Development Screenings for Children with High needs – Goals and Action Plan

Identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to Improve School Readiness: Adopt ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE as the common developmental screening tool to be implemented cross sector and create a coordinated referral process.	
Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bring stakeholders together to discuss how to use the ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE throughout the early childhood system and agree to share individual screening results among programs serving the family to avoid duplication. 2. Utilize information obtained from the screening process to inform referrals and curriculum to meet individual child needs. 3. Through Part C, Part B, and community coalitions, create and coordinate consistent Child Find process across the state. 4. Promote and include ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE and nutrition and physical activity guidelines in Montana's TQRIS. 	Outcomes by the end of the grant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE used cross sector in at least the following: TQRIS, Maternal and Early Childhood Home Visiting, Part C, and Child and Family Services. • Results from child screenings are able to be used among programs and as part of the transition process between any and all programs (following the child.) • 100% of STAR 4 providers conduct ASQ-3™ or ASQ:SE, or utilize screening results by another provider, to inform curriculum and supports for the child. Currently, two providers meet STAR 4 in MT
Action Plan	
2014	Engage and expand stakeholder group to assess current practices and screening tools through the health committee of BBAC and how ASQ-3™, ASQ:SE will be connected Expand training opportunities re: nutrition and physical activity to early childhood educators Continue training on ASQ-3™, ASQ:SE Identify initial plan to measure baseline for ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE Identify needed information and tracking process Include in system evaluation use of ASQ-3™, ASQ:SE as effective strategy in early identification
2015	Develop MOAs and provide training to programs re: sharing of confidential screening results Training on ASQ-3™, ASQ:SE continues and is expanded to include other sectors Pilot data tracking related to screening results and collect baseline data Initiate discussions about consistent child find process Create NAPA guidelines

2016	Adopt ASQ-3™, ASQ:SE process into STAR 4 criteria Review baseline data and identify quality of data with opportunities for improvement Pilot ASQ-3™, ASQ:SE as part of Child Find approach
2017	Evaluate ASQ-3™, ASQ:SE Child Find approach and target full implementation Disseminate NAPA guideline and include in TQRIS

Performance Measures for (C)(3)(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual statewide targets.					
	<i>Baseline and annual targets</i>				
	Baseline (Today, if known) <i>If unknown please use narrative to explain plan for defining baseline and setting and meeting annual targets</i>	Target for end of calendar year 2014	Target for end of calendar year 2015	Target for end of calendar year 2016	Target for end of calendar year 2017
Number of Children with High Needs screened	NA	10%	20%	30%	50%
Number of Children with High Needs referred for services who received follow-up/treatment	NA	10%	20%	30%	50%
Number of Children with High Needs who participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well child care	NA	10%	20%	30%	50%
Of these participating children, the number or percentage of children who are up-to-date in a schedule of well child care	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>[Montana does not have an effective way to gather this data at this point in time due to the inconsistent nature of child development screening. However, a statewide approach to developmental screenings is in the high quality plan as is identifying consistent baseline data with goals of expansion cross system. An</i>					

Performance Measures for (C)(3)(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual statewide targets.					
	<i>Baseline and annual targets</i>				
	Baseline (Today, if known) <i>If unknown please use narrative to explain plan for defining baseline and setting and meeting annual targets</i>	Target for end of calendar year 2014	Target for end of calendar year 2015	Target for end of calendar year 2016	Target for end of calendar year 2017
<i>epidemiologist is budgeted for this project to identify common data elements, reporting needs, and consistent tracking to not only inform the system, but to inform child/family outcomes. Montana feels as if this is the single most important next step in early identification and accessing services, especially for high needs children.</i>					

(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families. (20 points)

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate information and support to families of Children with High Needs in order to promote school readiness for their children by--

(a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development and help families build protective factors;

(b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an ongoing basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and

(c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources, such as home visiting programs, family resource centers, family support networks, and other family-serving agencies and organizations, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards for Family Engagement

(a) Establishing a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development and help families build protective factors;

Montana embraces the philosophy that parents are a child's first teacher. Throughout Montana's system, family respect, partnership and engagement are critical. We plan to continue to build upon the current efforts and work collaboratively across agencies including Montana's established parent organization, PLUK, to learn from each other for innovative ways to expand our commitment by establishing a systematic Family Support Network.

Montana's Early Learning Standards manifest a strong commitment to ensuring that children's growth and development is not negatively affected, and is in fact strengthened, by honoring the child's cultural and family heritage. It is not an accident that the very first standard in the new edition is entitled "Culture, Family, and Community". It is critically important that children are supported within the context of their families and communities, and the new Standards reflect that. The STARS to Quality Program mirrors that commitment; family and community engagement are woven throughout the rating scale and program quality is partly determined by the effectiveness of family engagement efforts and the cultural and linguistic appropriateness of services provided. Additionally, Montana's Early Care and Education Knowledge Base, which is Montana's workforce competency framework, has expectations through a continuum of competency levels for Cultural Diversity as its own content area. Cultural diversity is also a common thread through all of the other Knowledge Base competency areas.

There is a great diversity among 12 different Montana Tribal Nations having distinct and unique cultural heritage in their languages, histories, and governments. Many of Montana's American

Indian population do not live on reservations, but instead reside in the small communities or urban areas, underscoring the importance of families and educators appreciating and understanding each other's values to collaboratively support young children. Montana's population continues to diversify with an increase in refugee and immigrant families. Montana's rural isolation has its own cultural component, creating access issues and lack of community connection.

The Healthy Montana Teen Parent Program partners with many communities, including tribal communities, and engages teen parents to work on goals around self-sufficiency, healthy parenting, work readiness, father engagement and building natural supports to better provide for their children. Early Head Start and Head Start programs have similar goals and partner with parents on their Policy Councils. The MIECHV program offers home visiting services to support and model to low income rural families building positive parenting skills and connecting to other needed services in their community. Recognizing the powerful connection between an infant/toddler and their caregiver, Part C Early Intervention in Montana uses Routines Based Early Intervention (RBEI) working closely with families to target strategies and interventions for children's outcomes in the most natural setting with the adults who are the primary caregivers.

Professionals Trained and Supported in Family Engagement Strategies

<i>(b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an ongoing basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards; and</i>

Montana's Early Childhood Project oversees an early childhood training approval system which aligns with the Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base. In the areas of Family and Community Partnerships and Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, 244 courses were offered in 2012. Paired with the development and formalization of a Family Support Network, Montana will continue to increase the number of early childhood practitioners trained and will provide additional training cross sector. Specific to post-secondary education opportunities, course work is required in many of the two year early childhood degree programs focusing on family and community engagement. For example, through UM Western, students are required as part of their coursework to conduct a parent teacher conference and a home visit, along with other two-way communication assignments, as part of their lab setting.

The Office of Head Start defines family support as *"a set of relationships and principles that*

strengthen the developmental journey with families.” The Parent, Family and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework, supported by the Office of Head Start, is a research-based tool being implemented in Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms across the country. The PFCE Framework is intended for use in a multitude of facets, including program-wide strategic planning, transitions, program design and management, systems of continuous improvement, professional development for staff, as well as with governing bodies and parent groups. Another professional development resource for Head Start/Early Head Start is *Making It Work!*, a tool that provides a three step process for connecting cultural learning experience in AIAN communities/classrooms with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework (CDELF). *Making It Work!* supports AIAN early childhood staff in addressing school readiness requirements as they teach their traditional cultural skills, values, beliefs, and life ways.

This Early Learning Challenge would allow Montana to build on these and other training resources by providing additional training on family engagement and cultural and linguistic competence cross sector.

Promoting Family Engagement Statewide

(c) Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources, such as home visiting programs, family resource centers, family support networks, and other family-serving agencies and organizations, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

The Part C Family Support Services Advisory Council (FSSAC) has had great success in Montana with building family partnerships. Family members comprise a core component of the required membership. The FSSAC advises and assists Montana state agencies with a state-wide comprehensive approach to early intervention for children with disabilities from birth through age five. The Best Beginnings Advisory Council continues to promote through their Community Coalitions a parent/family presence, including hosting Family Forums throughout the State emphasizing school readiness through family engagement. PLUK is an information sharing source providing guidance regarding the best practices in the fields of education, medicine, law, human services, rehabilitation and technology so that family members and friends with disabilities have access to high quality services.

Part of Montana’s high quality plan is to leverage the success of the Family Support Services Advisory Council with a formal connection to the Best Beginnings Advisory Council to assure policy decisions reflect the needs of the family. Montana will utilize existing resources to

support and engage families. It will align the work into one common family engagement framework, building off *The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework*, the Center for Social Policy's *Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework*, and the Center for Disease Control's *Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments Framework*. These frameworks and their goals and strategies have proven successful in engaging families to support their children's development and learning. The frameworks include, but are not limited to, achieving success in relation to the following outcomes: family well-being, positive parent-child relationships and healthy attachments, families as lifelong educators, families as learners, family engagement in transitions, family connections to peers and community, and families as advocates. The **Montana Family Engagement Framework** will become the work of the Best Beginnings Advisory Council's Family Support Committee and Family Support Network that works to strengthen families by building protective factors and reducing risk factors in Montana communities. Montana recognizes that early learning and development outcomes for children are a partnership of family, community, and the education system. As such, a priority is given to this goal through collaboration of programs and intentional focus on family engagement.

Family Engagement – Goals, Objectives and Action Plan

Engage and Support Families: <i>Continue to focus on the importance of family engagement by incorporating successes of the Family Support Advisory Council into Best Beginnings Advisory Council.</i>	
<p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formalize a Family Support Network for the State of Montana, emphasizing professional development and family support practices. 2. Develop Montana Family Engagement Framework. 3. Include Family Support Specialists in Montana Early Childhood Practitioner Registry to track continuing education and verify credentials. 4. Incorporate family literacy model utilized in Early Reading First and Montana Striving Readers into family engagement with the Early Learning Standards. 	<p><i>Outcomes by the end of the grant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A family support network is well established with a Family Engagement Framework to contribute to parent support and training, information centers, and cross sector professional development. • 50% of the Family Support Specialists through Part C and Head Start/Early Head Start Family Advocates are on the Early Childhood Practitioner Registry. None at this time are included in the Registry. • When families need child care, at least 50% of children in home visiting, Child Protective Services, and Part C are referred to high quality STARS facilities This practice is not yet in place.

Action Plan	
2014	Identify stakeholders for family support network
	Conduct comprehensive scan of family support professional development opportunities across MT
	Develop outreach plan to get Family Support training approved through Early Childhood Project
	Plan family support summit to include development of the network
2015	Identify strategies for family engagement in public preschool and through grade 3
	Enhance Early Childhood Project database system to include Family Support Specialists
	Conduct Family Support Network summit
	Explore criteria to include in the Montana Family Engagement Framework
2016	Identify child care referral tracking process for high needs children w/in public/private sectors
	Begin to include Family Support Specialists in the registry
	Develop Montana Family Engagement Framework and pilot
2017	Fully implement and recognize Montana Family Engagement Framework cross sector

FOCUSED INVESTMENT AREA D - A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials. (20 points)

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to--

(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes;

(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and

(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Introduction and History

A skilled and motivated early childhood workforce is the foundation for high quality, intentional early childhood education for young children birth to age five and their families. Education is a key priority for developing a strong economy in Montana and increasingly the focus is turning to early education as an important step in reaching that goal. In the spring of 2013, Governor Bullock led a project call Mainstreet Montana, a “bottom up” effort to engage people across Montana in a dialogue about workforce development, job creation and growing Montana’s economy. Over 3,000 Montanans engaged in roundtable discussions and surveys, with education emerging as a major theme in developing a strong workforce and economy. Thus, it is critical we enact the system reforms and early education enhancements proposed in the Montana Early Learning Challenge. That process starts with ensuring that those in our early childhood workforce have the training and professional supports they need.

The 2008 Montana Economic Impact Report estimated 6,600 people work in early childhood statewide. Currently there are 253 licensed child care centers, employing almost 3,400 practitioners, 331 family child care homes with 370 staff and 445 family group childcare homes employing 1,591 people, for a total of almost 5,000 known providers. There are also almost 300 legally Certified Providers (family, friend and neighbor care) who care for young children and are able to access Best Beginnings Scholarships (subsidies) to help families pay for childcare.

Through the Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry, Montana has a mechanism for early childhood professionals to establish a historical professional development record and to be recognized at various Career Path levels, noting one’s educational and work experience. Career Path levels range from “Early Childhood Practitioner” level to Level 10 that requires a Ph.D. Additionally, Montana has K-8 teacher certification and an Early Childhood Permissive Special

Competency that is granted by a few higher education institutions in the State. Montana faces the same challenges that exist across the country finding and retaining well-qualified teachers who possess the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to help young children thrive. This is due, in part, to low compensation in the profession. Achieving compensation parity will be vitally important as Montana begins to develop a state-funded pre-K program.

In 1995, Montana began a planning process to develop a comprehensive, cohesive, and integrated career development system for early care and education. The Early Childhood Project (ECP) at Montana State University convened a group of diverse stakeholders to take on developing the Early Care and Education Knowledge Base (Core Knowledge and Competencies) and the Career Path as foundations for a strong early childhood workforce. *(Please see abridged ECE Knowledge Base on page 178 and ECE Career Path on page 154 of the Appendix.)*

Since that time, the Knowledge Base has been revised several times with the most recent major revision in January 2013 reflecting current research and evidence-based practice. The original Task Force became the Early Care and Education Career Development Advisory Board and continues to meet twice yearly to guide the work of the Early Childhood Project. Several members of this board also sit on the Professional Development Committee of the Best Beginnings Advisory Council, aimed at broader early childhood professional development.

In 1998, the ECP launched the Practitioner Registry and Professional Development Approval System and designed a database to manage the key components of the system. An interface was created in 2005 to connect the Practitioner Registry to Montana's childcare database, Child Care Under the Big Sky (CCUBS), to track training for all licensed/registered staff. Instructors submit training approval requests to the Early Childhood Project and indicate how the intended professional development aligns with the Knowledge Base. Part of Montana's high quality plan includes alignment with Early Learning Standards as well. Every approved course will indicate a Knowledge Base Area and identify the Early Learning Standards to be addressed in the course.

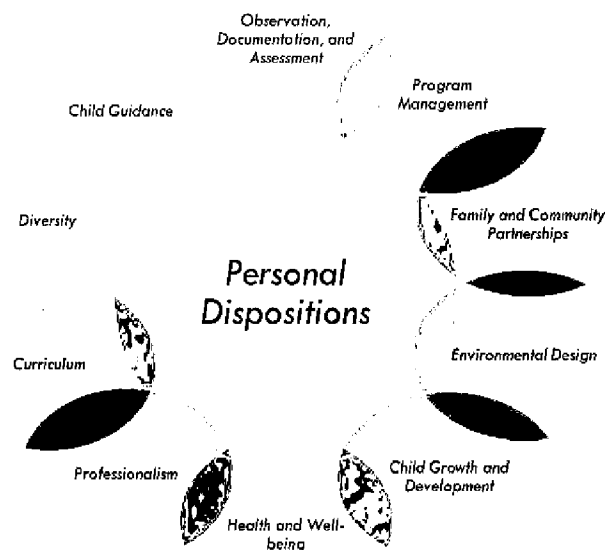
Workforce Knowledge and Competency Base

<i>(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children's learning and development and improve child outcomes</i>
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The Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base underwent a major revision based on current evidence and research (January 2013), and is now organized around the National

Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) evidence-based standards for teacher preparation and professional development, which addresses working in settings with children ages birth to five.¹ *(Please see 178 in Appendix for abridged Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base.)* The Knowledge Base is designed as a self-assessment tool to develop Individualized Professional Development Plans for program staff as required in the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program. It is the basis of non-credit bearing training approval for early childhood practitioners who work in licensed/registered child care, preschools, Head Start, and Early Head Start programs. Many ECE higher education programs utilize it as part of their course requirements or as a pre/post assessment tool. It is not currently being used to guide professional development and pathways in other early childhood sectors such as home visiting, family support specialists (Part C), or parent/family education and support programs. Montana's high quality plan includes work with other sectors to supplement the Knowledge Base as appropriate and relevant to each specified sector and will include tracking of professional development as well. The Knowledge Base Content Areas are illustrated in the following graphic, highlighting how the Essential Domains of School Readiness are imbedded throughout.

Knowledge Base Content Areas



¹ Advancing the Early Childhood Profession, Allison Lutton, editor, 2012

The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality program, the TQRIS approach for child care and Early Head Start/Head Start Programs has significantly changed early childhood professional development in the last four years by requiring specific staff training for each STAR level and incorporating intentional coaching and support for programs as they implement what they have learned in coursework and training. At the beginning levels, basic health and safety training including Safe Sleep, Medication Administration and Mandatory Reporting of child abuse and neglect are all required. Both the infant/toddler and preschool courses are aligned to the STARS matrix. The Pyramid Model, developed by Vanderbilt's Center on Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), is embedded in the matrix with training required to help practitioners learn about the framework and how to implement the strategies to help children be successful.² And, two courses on inclusion are also required that help practitioners support children and families with special needs. All courses are aligned with the Knowledge Base, creating a clear and cohesive continuum of training required for STARS programs and practitioners. This has also led to increasing interest and enrollment in professional development opportunities. As programs reach higher levels in STARS, coaching at the learning center level has been identified as a critical need to support practitioners to skillfully implement the Pyramid Model. Similarly, OPI has also embraced supporting their teachers through coaching strategies. DPHHS and OPI have offered Strengths-Based Coaching™ eight times across the state over the past two years training more than 200 early childhood educators, including mental health professionals, STARS coaches, school principals and superintendents, Part C providers, Head Start and other early childhood program directors and teachers. Montana has learned through the field test evaluation of the STARS program that coaching is essential and the infrastructure for coaching must expand and have consistent expectations. Expansion of coaching statewide and implementation of the Coaching Framework is included in Montana's high quality plan.

Progression of Degrees and Credentials

<i>(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework</i>

The Montana Early Care and Education Career Path outlines ten levels of pathways in early childhood education from entry level to graduate degrees. *(Please see the Career Pathway on*

²Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, and Strain (2003). *The Teaching Pyramid: A model for supporting social competence and preventing challenging behavior in young children*. Young Children, July 2003.

page 154 of the Appendix.) It is designed to help early childhood practitioners working in child care centers, Early Head Start, Head Start, preschools and others in support roles, such as trainers, coaches, and instructors in EC higher education chart their professional development through sequential steps, one leading to the next. Several specific certifications are now recognized for the field and tracked through the Practitioner Registry:

- Certified Infant and Toddler Caregivers: participants complete a 60 hour course specific to the developmental needs of Infants and Toddlers
- Certified Preschool Caregivers: participants complete a 60 hour course specific to preschool education
- Early Childhood Program Directors: the newest credential specific to administration of early childhood programs
- Professional Development Specialists (Trainers/Instructors): 3 levels ranging from entry level to advanced experience with set criteria. Montana has now begun to recognize the needed skill set for delivering courses at the novice to advanced levels.

Montana's high quality plan also includes development of a Coaching Credential aligned with the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Coaching Framework.

Montana has intentionally created a progression of courses that align with achievement on the Career Path. For example, many individuals start with the Certified Infant Toddler or Preschool Course, and then advance to the Apprenticeship or the 30 credit certificate, and often onto a Bachelor's degree and beyond. Montana has worked hard to create a Career Path continuum in which the practitioner can enter at any point based on set criteria, and can advance or not. The following progression of credentials and degrees align with the Early Care and Education Knowledge Base and are recognized as pathways to levels on the Montana Early Care and Education Career Path/Practitioner Registry:

- a. Infant Toddler Caregiver or Preschool Teacher Courses are each 60 hours. (Level 2)
- b. Child Development Associate (CDA) is a national credential awarded by the Council for Professional Recognition and is recognized at two levels on the Career Path: (Level 3) awarded through non-college credit bearing professional development, and; (Level 4) achieved through college credit.

- c. MT Child Development Specialist Apprenticeship Program that requires 24 college credits in early childhood education and was developed collaboratively through Montana's Early Childhood Services Bureau and Department of Labor and Industry, with input from early childhood higher education faculty, also recognized by the Office of Head Start. (Level 4)
- d. Certificate in Early Childhood Education requires 30 college credits of course work available through several Montana colleges. (Level 4)
- e. Associate of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education from accredited colleges and universities. Associate's programs in Montana are offered through UM-Western, Dawson Community College, Salish Kootenai College, Flathead Valley Community College, and MSU-Bozeman. (Level 5)
- f. Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education from accredited colleges and universities. (Level 6). Bachelor's programs in Montana are offered through Montana State University-Bozeman, University of Montana Western, and Salish Kootenai College. MSU Bozeman offers an on line Bachelor of Arts degree through a grant from the Office of Indian Education for tribal Head Start teachers. The Early Childhood Permissive Special Competency is available through several higher education institutions (UM-Western and MSU-Bozeman, and MSU-Billings), appears as a minor on the Elementary Teacher License and qualifies under the Head Start Act as equivalent to a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education if added to any bachelor's degree.
- g. A Master's or doctorate degree with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education. Currently a Master's degree in early childhood education is not available from a Montana institution, but degrees from out of state are recognized if attained from a regionally accredited college or university. (Level 9)

Postsecondary Involvement in Planning

(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in aligning professional development opportunities with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework

The Early Childhood Project at Montana State University-Bozeman manages Montana's Practitioner Registry and Professional Development Approval System, along with taking on various planning, curriculum and career development projects. Professional development providers such as Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and other training sponsors must

identify Knowledge Base content areas for training to be approved through the Early Childhood Project for posting on the Statewide Training Calendar and to meet requirements for licensing, the Practitioner Registry and Best Beginnings STARS to Quality.

ECP also convenes Montana’s Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium (ECHEC) which meets at least twice a year to address professional development issues related to higher education. This group recently provided leadership for the revisions of the Knowledge Base and Early Learning Standards and took the lead in developing common course numbering for early childhood education as mandated by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE). Some institutions use the Knowledge Base in their coursework. OCHE will develop systems-level coordination regarding secondary to postsecondary early childhood pathways, dual credit opportunities for high school students, faculty professional development and strengthening support for students on the Career Path.

Montana Early Learning Challenge – Workforce Development Goals

Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework/Progression of Credentials: <i>Promote consistent and high quality professional development opportunities to improve instruction in early learning programs that align with the Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base.</i>	
<p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote and include Knowledge Base as identified professional development competency framework cross sector. 2. Expand on and develop additional credentials and/or certification for various Early Childhood practitioner roles cross system. 3. Engage post- secondary institutions and other Professional Development providers in assessment of programs offered, assuring common approach to teacher preparation, including alignment with Knowledge Base and Early Learning Standards. 	<p><i>Outcomes by the end of the grant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplements to the Knowledge Base will be developed for identified sectors demonstrating cross sector understanding of common framework. • P-3 Credential/Endorsement is recognized and available as part of the teacher certification process. • Career pathways are supported from secondary, post-secondary, and non-credit professional development providers and align with Knowledge Base, Early Learning Standards, and NAEYC Standards for Teacher Preparation. • 100% of licensed and registered child care providers and staff are recognized in the Montana Practitioner Registry.

Action Plan	
2014	<p>Identify interested sectors to be included in the KB through supplements,</p> <p>Review data systems for effective tracking methods for PD cross sector</p> <p>Develop matrix of current credentials and degrees using the Career Opportunities booklet</p> <p>Conduct Higher Education Inventory to map status of EC higher education that includes all community, tribal and MUS institutions</p> <p>Report results to Best Beginnings Advisory Council and other key stakeholders</p>
2015	<p>Develop supplements for identified sectors</p> <p>Identify additional credentials needed cross sector</p> <p>Develop action plan for additional credential development aligned with Knowledge Base and NAEYC Standards for ECE Teacher Preparation</p> <p>Montana University System and Tribal Colleges convene to address secondary to postsecondary pathways, dual credit, faculty professional development and status of programs system- wide</p> <p>Analyze gaps in approved non- credit bearing PD through ECP data reports and others to identify further cross-sector needs and opportunities for PD based on Knowledge Base</p> <p>In response to inventories and system reviews (2014), develop more detailed action plan</p>
2016	<p>Explore inclusion in child care licensing standards for requirements to join Registry</p> <p>Develop modules in the Registry for identified sectors</p> <p>Explore licensure process for teacher endorsement and/or credential for P-3 through Office of Public Instruction</p>
2017	<p>Include in teacher preparatory programs identified courses to support additional credentials and endorsements specific to P-3</p>

(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities. (20 points)

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to improve the effectiveness and retention of Early Childhood Educators who work with Children with High Needs, with the goal of improving child outcomes by-

- (a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that-*
 - (1) Are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;*
 - (2) Tightly link training with professional development approaches, such as coaching and mentoring; and*
 - (3) Are supported by strong evidence (e.g. available evaluations, developmental theory, or data or information) as to why these policies and incentives will be effective in improving outcomes for Children with High Needs;*
- (b) Implementing effective policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) to promote professional improvement/career advancement along an articulated career pathway that-*
 - (1) Are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;*
 - (2) Tightly link training with professional development approaches, such as coaching and mentoring; and*
 - (3) Are supported by strong evidence (e.g., available evaluations, developmental theory, or data or information) as to why these policies and incentives will be effective in improving outcomes for Children with High Needs;*
- (c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention; and*
- (d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--*
 - (1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and*
 - (2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.*

Providing and Expanding Access to Professional Development

- (a) Providing and expanding access to effective professional development opportunities that-*
 - (1) Are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;*
 - (2) Tightly link training with professional development approaches, such as coaching and mentoring*
 - (3) Are supported by strong evidence as to why these policies and incentives will be effective in improving outcomes for Children with High Needs;*

Montana's current system of support for early learning and development is delivered through training and technical assistance provided primarily by the Montana CCR & R Network, which includes 11 agencies each serving multi-county regions. Each agency employs a Professional Development Specialist (PDS) to develop ongoing training, offer STARS-required training and provide technical assistance to support STARS providers. These (PDS) are required to be a Level 6 on the Career Path in addition to meeting the other requirements of the Professional

Development Specialist framework, which include adult learning training and/or coursework and experience working with adult learners.

Qualifications	PDS I	PDSII	PDS III	Specialty Trainer
	Must be at least 18 years of age →			
	At least a current Level 4 on the Career Path Training Basics (this course requires 12-24 hours of training experience) OR equivalent Adult Education training/ coursework	At least a current Level 5 on Career Path Adult Learning I* and Training Basics (this course requires 12-24 hours of training experience) OR equivalent Adult Education training/coursework	At least a current Level 6 on Career Path Adult Learning I and II* OR equivalent Adult Education training/ coursework	Education or training that leads to expertise in a specific profession (i.e., accountant, firefighter, nutritionist, occupational therapists, counselors)
Additional Application Requirements	Resume (must include a list of a minimum of 12 hours of previous training experience stating title, date, sponsor, hours)	Resume (must include a list of previous training experience by title, sponsor, date and hours in the last 5 years)		Exempt
	Two References (checklist on file) →			
	Signed Code of Ethical Conduct: Supplement for EC Adult Educators			
Experience in Adult Learning and/or Coaching	Must have at least 10 hours of supervised training with an Oversight Trainer. Identified Oversight Trainer must be a PDS II or III	Must be able to document 30 hours of training experience OR the teaching of 2 semester college credits (30 hours)	Must be able to document 60 hours of training experience OR the teaching of 4 semester college credits (60 hours)	Exempt

Other professionals can also provide approved courses, but must meet PDS levels as well. All professional development must align with the Knowledge Base and is reviewed. This is managed through the Practitioner Registry database and attendance at approved events is tracked through online Professional Development Records.

The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) offers systems of support for early childhood educators working with children with high needs through specific grants such as Striving Readers, Project REAL, and the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). These grants include ongoing professional development and some include coaching. OPI coordinates the annual Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI) Summer Institute with an Early Childhood track to provide professional development around Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and social emotional development. The OPI also sponsors the Early Childhood Partnership for Professional Development (ECPPD) that shares information about early childhood professional development opportunities with a cross-systems group of early childhood educators, also connected to the Best Beginnings Advisory Council PD committee. The Board of Public Education and the Office of Public Instruction are considering development of an early childhood credential or license, equalizing early childhood teachers with other teacher licensing.

The Professional Development Committee of the Best Beginnings Advisory Council is charged with identifying and promoting cross-sector early childhood professional development and coordinating with all other committees and groups (such as ECPPD) to accomplish that task.

UM-Western, Dawson Community College, Salish Kootenai College and Flathead Valley Community College, and MSU-Billings all have two year associate degrees in ECE. Some of these also offer a 30 credit Certificate in ECE. UM-Western, MSU-Bozeman and Salish Kootenai College all offer four year ECE degrees. MSU Bozeman has received Office of Indian Education grants to support online bachelor's degree achievement for tribal Head Start teachers. UM-Western has an online bachelor's degree program and offers a cohort model program for students at several outreach sites across the state and an online EC Rural option to complete the 24 credit Early Childhood Education core.

Montana does not have a clear picture of all ECE courses and programs being offered through all colleges, including tribal, community colleges, two and four year institutions. Montana's high quality plan includes a Higher Education Inventory to assess current status of all programs and course offerings. This will lead to identifying gaps and unmet needs in access to postsecondary early childhood education. However, it is clear that potential ECE students living in rural or frontier counties across Montana have a very difficult time accessing educational offerings to meet professional qualifications and career goals due to vast distances and limited or no Internet

access. We will take careful consideration of these challenges and will utilize digital learning opportunities as well as face-to-face outreach.

Currently the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies are providing coaching to STARS participants and OPI's Striving Readers program provides coaching to their grantees. The ECP facilitated a Work Group over the past year to develop a Coaching Framework for STARS coaches. During that process, a need was identified to establish an Early Childhood Technical Assistance System that included coaching and other relationship-based professional development opportunities, differentiating between technical assistance and coaching. Montana's high quality plan includes a Coaching Credential. Based on the external evaluation of the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality field test conducted by Compass Evaluation, there is compelling evidence that coaching has been an effective method of assisting programs in advancing to increased levels of quality through the STARS system (*Refer to Executive Summary on page 160 of the Appendix.*)

Effective Policies and Incentives

(b) Implementing effective policies and incentives (e.g., scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives, management opportunities) to promote professional improvement/career advancement along an articulated career pathway that-

- (1) Are aligned with the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework;*
- (2) Tightly link training with professional development approaches, such as coaching and mentoring; and*
- (3) Are supported by strong evidence as to why these policies and incentives will be effective in improving outcomes for Children with High Needs;*

Montana administers a variety of incentive, award, and scholarship programs to support workforce and program improvement. (*Please see Workforce Incentives Chart on page 159 of Appendix.*) Both non-credit bearing and credit-based professional development opportunities are supported through incentive grants. The Practitioner Registry has two awards available to promote college level advancement on the Career Path and renewal with the Practitioner Registry. Montana has implemented some creative strategies linking professional development specific to infants and toddlers with incentives toward continuity of care. When a caregiver completes the Certified Infant Toddler Course (CITC) and continues to work in the same program with infants and toddlers, they are eligible for not only a professional development incentive award, but a continuity of care stipend at 6 months, 18 months, and 24 months after course completion. We know that infants and toddlers thrive on consistent caregiving routines, especially high needs children require consistent attachment to adults. Due to high turnover in the field and low wages for workers, Montana has attempted to provide creative strategies and

incentives for professionals to continue their education. Montana's high quality plan includes additional creative strategies and outreach to early learning and development practitioners.

In addition to individual incentives for training completion and degree/credential attainment, Best Beginnings STARS to Quality also offers financial and other incentives to programs advancing through the rating scale, in part based on the levels of education and training their staff achieve. These incentives are a strong motivator for programs to encourage continuing education among their staff, and some programs offer staff internal incentives and/or pay increases when they reach career benchmarks. In addition, OCHE has plans for a training stipend system to support early childhood practitioners access higher education offerings.

Reporting Data on Early Childhood Educator Development and Effectiveness

<i>(c) Publicly reporting aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention</i>

The Practitioner Registry is completely web-based with a robust and flexible database. It records and verifies education, training, and experience. The Registry is currently voluntary except for individuals who want to access the varied incentives, awards, and grants, and for program participation in Best Beginnings STARS to Quality. The Registry includes both provider data and program data with unique identifiers. It also provides professional development records for all licensed/registered child care staff through an interface with the State's child care data system Child Care Under the Big Sky (CCUBS). The Professional Development Approval System and Practitioner Registry generate data on all approved coursework, and can identify gaps in training offered statewide, by region and by Knowledge Base content area.

Montana looks to the future to use the data to guide development and strategic planning for professional development. An early childhood data specialist is included in the high quality plan to mine the data to inform policy, practices and planning and to prepare reports available to professional development providers and postsecondary institutions. Additionally, the state needs to produce a State of the Early Childhood Workforce Report to utilize Practitioner Registry and other verified data in a meaningful way and guide future policy and planning. There are many unanswered questions regarding the connections that can be made between Registry information and program data and the impact of professional development activities on child outcomes. A

skilled researcher will enable Montana to make those connections and better understand the impact of workforce development on program quality.

Montana Early Learning Challenge – Professional Development Goals

- (d) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for--*
- (1) Increasing the number of postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and the number of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework; and*
- (2) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.*

The Montana Early Learning Challenge has the following goals and objectives for helping early childhood practitioners improve their knowledge and skills:

Support Educators in Improving Knowledge and Skills: *Recruit and retain early childhood teachers who work with high needs children and improve the effectiveness of teaching strategies to improve child outcomes.*

<p><i>Objectives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a statewide overarching Early Childhood Technical Assistance System that incorporates cross sector strategies. 2. Create and enhance incentive options for workforce development and retention. 3. Identify strategy for tracking and reporting aggregate data on early childhood development degrees, advancement, and retention cross sector and cross system. 4. Increase the number of post-secondary institutions and other professional development providers to support an increased number of early childhood professionals receiving credentials and advancing on career pathway. 5. Develop and increase opportunities for rural communities through expanded online and distance education coursework 6. Develop a collaborative Master's Degree approach in Montana. 	<p><i>Outcomes by the end of the grant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% increase in the number of enrolled students in pathways and/or post-secondary early childhood education. • Increase the number of Certified Infant Toddler Caregivers, Certified Preschool Caregivers, and Apprenticeship participants by 10%. • Increase the number of post-secondary institutions offering EC by at least 2 institutions. • The STARS Coaching System is implemented statewide and cross sector within a competency framework and coaches are supported through supervision, learning communities, ongoing professional development.
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Action Plan	
2014	<p>Partner with OPI to establish joint expectations of coaches</p> <p>Pilot the STARS coaching framework for non-public schools</p> <p>Identify and engage cross sector stakeholders in the Early Childhood TA System including especially MIECHV, Part C, Family Support, and Public Preschool, Head Start/EHS</p> <p>Restore incentives for CCDS Apprenticeship program</p> <p>Examine opportunities to include compensation parity for early childhood practitioners aligned with the Governor's equal pay task force</p> <p>Implement tuition and books scholarships for students in 2 year postsecondary programs</p> <p>Evaluate online learning resources and existing programs</p> <p>Research loan forgiveness options for ECE</p> <p>Develop marketing and communication plan to raise statewide awareness of incentives, scholarships, awards and program to support ECE PD</p>
	<p>Identify effectiveness measurements for TA System and methods for collection</p> <p>Collaborate with MIECHV program to explore and develop plan for cross sector coaching through Pyramid Model Partnership</p> <p>ECP data specialist to use data to guide policy, program development and cross sector reports</p> <p>Develop EC workforce report</p> <p>Develop incentive options</p> <p>Institute career advising through post-secondary institutions and Early Childhood Project</p> <p>Establish coaching learning communities by STARS quadrants</p> <p>Begin to develop additional online and distance course options</p>
	<p>Examine feasibility of EC coaching credential inclusive of public preschool and other sectors</p> <p>Use national planning tools to align EC data to GEMS</p> <p>Offer additional online and distance courses</p>
	<p>Continue all activities</p> <p>Identify and roll out steps for collaborative Master's Degree</p>

Performance Measures for (D)(2)(d)(1): Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators receiving credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework					
	Baseline (Today)	Target - end of calendar year 2014	Target - end of calendar year 2015	Target - end of calendar year 2016	Target – end of calendar year 2017
Total number of “aligned” institutions and providers	Estimated 186	204	214	224	234

Total number of Early Childhood Educators credentialed by an “aligned” institution or provider	Estimated 364	382	396	410	424
<p>This table reflects the estimated total number of aligned institutions for 2011-2012 including the following aligned institutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 170 training sponsors approved in database from ECP • 11 Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies • 5 Higher Ed institutions that report annual number for inclusion of graduates on ECP’s Wall of Honor <p>These 186 institutions provided an estimated 364 educators with credentials in year 2011-2012. Data source Early Childhood Services Bureau CCUBS for I/T and PS and data reported to ECP from HEIs on ECE graduates for Wall of Honor (2011-2012).</p> <p>Growth projections related to “aligned institutions” include at least 2 post-secondary institutions offering credential programs and additional cross sector PD providers. Numbers in the table reflect data that is known to ECP based on current workforce participants. As Montana’s high quality plan continues, cross sector workforce data will be available over time.</p> <p>Including baseline and through the end of the grant period, 1976 early childhood educators will have received at least one credential, which is a 33% increase based on the total workforce data number reflected in Table (D) (2) (d) (2).</p>					

Performance Measures for (D)(2)(d)(2): Increasing number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.										
Progression of credentials (Aligned to Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework)	<i>Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who have moved up the progression of credentials, aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, in the prior year</i>									
	Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target- end of calendar year 2015		Target- end of calendar year 2016		Target- end of calendar year 2017	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Credential Type 1 <i>Infant Toddler</i>	98	2%	101	2%	104	2%	107	2%	110	2%
Credential Type 2 <i>Preschool</i>	123	2%	126	2%	129	2%	132	3%	135	3%
Credential Type 3 <i>CDA:</i>	66	1%	68	2%	70	2%	72	2%	74	2%
Credential Type 4* <i>CCDS Apprenticeship</i>	10	<1%	11	1%	12	1%	13	1%	14	1%
Credential Type 5* <i>Director Credential</i>	0	0%	5	2%	6	3%	7	3%	8	4%

Performance Measures for (D)(2)(d)(2): Increasing number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who are progressing to higher levels of credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Progression of credentials (Aligned to Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework)	Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who have moved up the progression of credentials, aligned to the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, in the prior year									
	Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target- end of calendar year 2015		Target- end of calendar year 2016		Target- end of calendar year 2017	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Credential Type 6 * 30 credit college *certificate	3	<1%	4	<1%	5	<1%	6	<1%	7	1%
Credential Type 7 EC Associate's degree	36	<1%	37	1%	38	1%	39	1%	40	1%
Credential Type 8 EC Bachelor's degree	20	<1%	21	1%	22	1%	23	1%	24	1%
Credential Type 9* EC Minor (permissive special Competency)	8	<1%	9	<1%	10	<1%	11	1%	12	1%

Include a row for each credential in the State's proposed progression of credentials, customize the labeling of the credentials, and indicate the highest and lowest credential.

Logic for this table is to grow each of the credentials related to practitioners with credentials, by 2.5% (rounding) in each year for each type of credential, except the CCDS Apprenticeship, 30 college credit certificate, and EC Minor, which are projected at 10% each year or growth by 1, due to the lower number enrolled. Director credential growth is also skewed in the first year due it being new.

The percentage column reflects the # of EC credentialed compared to the baseline number of EC practitioners. Total workforce number is 6150 and includes licensed/registered and Head Start & EHS programs. Figures may be duplicative related to Head Starts that are licensed (CCUBS data source).

Important note: 6150 includes EC practitioners who may already have a degree or credential, but received it prior to the baseline year.

For comparison purposes for Director Credential, the baseline is 252 Center Directors (CCUBS)).

This same baseline number is applied throughout every year of the grant, although Montana expects it to grow more rapidly by including cross sector professionals in cross sector development.

I/T, PS, CCDS Apprenticeship information came from Early Childhood Services Bureau DPHHS CCUBS CDA from Council for Professional Recognition 2010-12 as reported to ECP for Wall of Honor College Numbers from ECP as reported by institutions for 2010-2013 for Wall of Honor

FOCUSED INVESTMENT AREA E - Measuring Outcomes and Progress

(E)(1) Understanding the status of children’s learning and development at kindergarten entry. (40 points)

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades and that--

(a) Is aligned with the State’s Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness;

(b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities;

(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of the school year ending during the fourth year of the grant to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation;

(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws; and

(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of ESEA).

Status of Kindergarten Entry Assessment in Montana

The extent to which the State has a High-Quality Plan to implement, independently or as part of a cross-State consortium, a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment that informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades

Building on the work in many schools across Montana, which are using various tools and protocols to appraise the readiness of their entering kindergarteners, Montana recently began exploring the concept of a common Kindergarten Entry Assessment strategy to be used across the State. Too many students with high needs are starting school well behind their peers, unprepared for the school experience. Montana needs an appropriate and comprehensive way to assess student skills and abilities, and likewise their needs, *before* they enter kindergarten.

The Best Beginnings Advisory Council has taken up this charge, with cross system leadership from the Early Childhood Services Bureau of DPHHS and the Early Childhood Programs at The Office of Public Instruction. In early 2013, the Council’s Professional Development Committee contracted Dr. Christine Lux of Montana State University – Bozeman to conduct a literature review and submit a report about the status of kindergarten assessments across the state. The report operationalized the phrase *early childhood assessment* to include distinction between the terms testing, screening, evaluation, and assessment. The National Research Council (2008) suggested that “*assessments of children may be used for purposes as diverse as determining the level of functioning of individual children, guiding instruction, or measuring functioning at the*

program, community, or state level”¹ In Montana, establishing a clear definition of assessment will provide clarity about the purposes of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) strategy and support a collaborative effort focused on what is best for children.

In preparation for this Early Learning Challenge grant, an informal survey was sent to Montana kindergarten teachers and STARS early childhood programs and Head Start/Early Head Start. 155 kindergarten teachers and 52 early childhood programs responded. In general, kindergarten teachers’ responses indicated that the only content area that relies on a screening tool (DIBELS, AIMS Web, ASQ, ASQ-SE, DIAL) is the language and literacy domain, but it is not consistently evaluated. Examples of kindergarten teacher responses included:

- *I think an overall assessment is needed. It should address social and emotional development as well as other areas.*
- *I believe a discussion with parents about their child goes a long way. It’s helpful to know what the children are going through, their educational background, and parent concerns.*
- *I am adamantly opposed to screening kindergarteners. I believe it is the teacher’s job to be ready for the students, not the child’s job to be ready for school.*
- *Screening should occur shortly before school begins - not the spring prior to admission. The information needs to be meaningful.*

Of the early childhood program respondents, roughly 25% of respondents referenced ASQ, ASQ-SE and DIAL as utilized tools. More than 30% responded that they are not screening for developmental readiness. Examples of responses included:

- *I use my observations and knowledge of school readiness.*
- *We use our own method for assessing school readiness which entails observations and assessments from the classroom teachers.*
- *We use many different tools: observation, Ages and Stages, speech screening, Focus Portfolios. I have learned over the years that observation is one of the best tools.*

While the informal survey is not intended to be statistically reliable, it captures the current landscape in Montana, which indicates the state has work to do – building consensus, evaluating best practices, and supporting community-based implementation of a common Kindergarten Entry Assessment in Montana.

¹ National Research Council (2008). Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How. Report Brief,

Goals for Montana's Kindergarten Entry Assessment Initiative

Our goal is clear: working in partnership with preschool and kindergarten experts and parents, the Best Beginnings Advisory Council and OPI plan to lead a research, evaluation and decision-making process that will culminate in a common kindergarten readiness assessment strategy that is appropriate for children across the state and, in particular, children with high needs. The following objectives and action plan will help us reach that goal.

Understand the Status of Children's Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry: <i>Identify and implement a strategy for Kindergarten Entry Assessment in Montana.</i>	
Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify statewide protocol to be used in communities through coalitions and LEAs that will be included as part of the KEA. 2. Research and evaluate current assessment practices in kindergarten across the state along with other state strategies. 3. Identify and implement a KEA strategy. 4. Include as part of the KEA strategy parent education that contributes to a parent's ability to advocate for their child related to their child's education. 	Outcomes by the end of the grant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 50% of the Best Beginnings Community Coalitions, in partnership with LEAs, have adopted the transition protocol. • A common KEA strategy is used in high needs communities. • Kindergarten teachers, preschool teachers and administrators will have professional development opportunities provided through State conferences
Action Plan	
2014	Conduct scan of local communities regarding use of transition tools Conduct focus groups and hold kindergarten conference to identify practices re: assessment Research other states' approaches
2015	Identify statewide approach to transition protocol and develop materials Hold a joint conference with kindergarten teachers, public preschools, STARS providers and BB coalitions related to transitions and assessment Conduct focus groups with parents Identify common KEA elements
2016	Transition protocol is used in high needs target communities Develop parent outreach and education plan regarding KEA Pilot implementation of KEA in the highest need communities Develop data fields in longitudinal data system GEMS
2017	Evaluate effectiveness of KEA in pilot

Alignment with Early Learning Standards and Essential Domains of School Readiness

(a) Is aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness

Montana's KEA strategy will align with the **Essential Domains of School Readiness** and Montana's **Early Learning Standards**:

Essential Domains of School Readiness	Montana Early Learning Standards
Physical Development and Health	Core Domain 2 – Physical Physical Development Health, Safety, and Personal Care
Social and Emotional Development	Core Domain 1 – Emotional/Social Culture, Family, and Community Emotional Development Social Development
Approaches to Learning	Core Domain 4 – Cognition Approaches to Learning Reasoning/Representational Thought Creative Arts
Cognitive Development and General Knowledge	Core Domain 4 – Cognition Mathematics and Numeracy Science Social Studies
Language, Communications and Literacy	Core Domain 3 - Communication Communication and Language Development Literacy

Each Essential Domain will be included to ensure that kindergarten teachers are familiar with children's readiness across the full spectrum of development. Finally, the proposed KEA will be aligned with Montana's **Common Core Standards for Kindergarten** in English Language Arts, Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects and Mathematics, as well as the Indian Education for All Standards. Though children entering kindergarten will not be expected to meet those standards, it will be important that they have the foundational knowledge and skills to reach that goal by the end of the school year.

This alignment will contribute to an overall coordinated system that has its foundations in the Early Learning Standards – the KEA strategy, TQRIS standards for quality, and workforce knowledge base all focused on the same four domains.

A Kindergarten Entry Assessment That is Valid, Reliable and Appropriate for MT

b) Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities

Montana is clear that we do not want to implement a KEA for the sole purpose of testing.

Montana's approach is for the KEA to be culturally and linguistically appropriate and to include an adequate reflection of children's temperament, abilities, and general developmental stage to inform curriculum and individualize instructional approach. To do this well, Montana believes that part of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment strategy should include a culturally-relevant transition process and profile. A transition profile can consist of parent input, a culturally-relevant home visit, a pre-entry conference, a developmental screening, a checklist completed by a preschool teacher/child care/Head Start Program, or a work sample portfolio.

Building on the transition process and profile, Montana intends to develop a multi-phase, high-quality plan to implement a common, statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) strategy. Development of an assessment process that includes a formative assessment will ensure that the KEA strategy in Montana will be unique to the needs of Montanans, with valuable input from state stakeholders, especially kindergarten teachers and principals from both rural and urban districts. As suggested by the RTT-ELC, the purpose of the KEA in Montana will be to inform instruction and services in the early elementary grades as well as to engage families by providing opportunities to share information about their child's development and to encourage involvement in decision-making about their child's education. The KEA will not be used to prevent a child from entering kindergarten, nor will the assessment be used as a single measure for high-stakes decisions. A strengths based approach will be used. Though some components of the KEA may be designed to identify concerns or delays, the tone and approach of the overall strategy will be on identifying each child's abilities, talents and interests.

The development process will follow the recommendations of the National Research Council by ensuring that: assessment activity is conducted within a coherent system of health, educational and family support services; assessment is aligned with other system elements (e.g. Montana's Early Learning Standards); sufficient training is provided to early educators to understand the purpose and process of the KEA, and; the burden of conducting the assessment is minimal.²

² National Research Council (2008). Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What and How.

Dr. Lux's report suggested next steps in establishing a systematic approach to selection, implementation, and interpretation of valid and reliable assessment tools used for the purpose of supporting children's well-being in all domains of development, measured at the individual and program level. Montana intends to follow those next steps by initiating a thoughtful and inclusive process in developing its KEA. Stakeholders, including Head Start, preschool and kindergarten teachers, and principals and early childhood center directors, will be invited to participate in focus groups throughout the state to determine what kinds of assessments are currently administered to young children to measure school readiness and to identify what teachers would like in an assessment process. Additional focus groups will be held with parents of kindergarteners to gather parent perspective related to KEA and school readiness. Including parents in the process is important to foster relationships and express the value of parents' input. In addition, parent focus groups could assist in identifying strategies for increasing parent knowledge about assessment. This feedback can lay the foundation for parent advocacy on behalf of their child within the educational system. Focus groups will be led by educational researchers selected from institutions of higher education in the Montana University System. Data collected in the focus groups will be used to begin the process of KEA development.

Once focus groups are conducted and a review of other states' approaches is completed, elements for the proposed KEA will be identified by a core stakeholder group. This stakeholder group will be an ad hoc committee of the Best Beginnings Advisory Council and will include kindergarten and preschool teachers, principals, Head Start or early childhood center directors and representatives from the Office of Public Instruction, DPHHS, and the Montana University System. Dr. Lux's report included examples of valid and reliable assessments accompanied by information and resources to ensure appropriate and ethical use and interpretation of data. This information will be helpful in the decision making process.

Once Montana's strategy is identified, an expert review, understandability study, and pilot administration of the KEA will be analyzed to determine reliability and validity. A critique of items by identified experts (expert review), as well as a sample of kindergarten teachers, (understandability study) will help to establish face, or content validity of the KEA used in Montana. Content validity means that the instrument is relevant to and representative of the construct of school readiness.

Timeline and Administration Schedule

(c) Is administered beginning no later than the start of the school year ending during the fourth year of the grant to children entering a public school kindergarten; States may propose a phased implementation plan that forms the basis for broader statewide implementation

The research and development process is expected to take up to two years and require strong collaboration between and among all stakeholders. Once a KEA strategy is designed, it will have a phased administration starting with a pilot in the third year of the grant. (FY16) Allowing sufficient time to field test the strategy, develop communication strategies to ensure educators and the public understand the purpose and design of the KEA, and provide sufficient training and supports to early educators to build their skills and confidence in administering the strategy are important considerations driving this phased approach.

Integration with Existing Data Systems

(d) Is reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, if it is separate from the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy law

As Montana begins implementation of the KEA, some data will be reported to GEMS, the statewide comprehensive longitudinal data system. Montana is prepared to modify GEMS to accommodate common indicators identified in the KEA to track outcomes. This will allow data to be analyzed for the purpose of informing efforts to close the school readiness gap at kindergarten entry. It is important to note that individual level data will not be used to make high stakes decisions and that data will be handled outside the scope of normal educational data and reporting. It will be maintained in a “sandbox” accessible only to individual schools and teachers, used simply to improve instruction to better support the strengths and address the needs of individual students and, thereby, help close the school readiness and achievement gap.

Funding for Development and Administration of the Montana KEA

(e) Is funded, in significant part, with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant (e.g., with funds available under section 6111 or 6112 of ESEA).

The work related to Montana’s KEA strategy will occur within existing funding sources, through Best Beginnings Community Coalitions and public school funds related to the KEA in the classroom. The state is committed to utilizing funds outside this grant for the bulk of this work, including appropriate federal, state and private funding.

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 2

Priority 2: Competitive Preference Priority -- Including All Early Learning and Development Programs in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. (10 points)

Priority 2 is designed to increase the number of children from birth to kindergarten entry who are participating in programs that are governed by the State's licensing system and quality standards, with the goal that all licensed or State-regulated programs will participate. The State will meet this priority based on the extent to which the State has in place, or has a High-Quality Plan to implement no later than June 30th of the fourth year of the grant--

(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will determine whether an applicant has met this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities; and

(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate.

Two facets of the Montana Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System are included in Montana's high quality plan, including expansion of Best Beginnings STARS to Quality to include all eligible licensed and registered child care facilities, tribal child care, and all Head Start and Early Head Start Programs, including tribal Head Start/Early Head Start. Critical to Montana's plan of high needs children in quality settings, the plan includes specific emphasis on referral and placement of high needs children requiring child care who are receiving home visiting services, Part C services, or those who are in the Child Protective Services system.

Montana's Licensing/Certification System for Child Care Programs

(a) A licensing and inspection system that covers all programs that are not otherwise regulated by the State and that regularly care for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; provided that if the State exempts programs for reasons other than the number of children cared for, the State may exclude those entities and reviewers will determine whether an applicant has met this priority only on the basis of non-excluded entities

Becoming licensed or registered as a child care center, group or family child care program is the first step toward quality improvement. It also assures basic health and safety standards are met. Montana has a licensing and inspection system in place that covers child care programs. The following laws (Montana Code Annotated) define the covered entities subject to oversight by the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS).

MCA 52-2-703

(4) "Day-care facility" means a person, association, or place, incorporated or unincorporated, that provides day care on a regular basis or a place licensed or registered to provide day care on an irregular basis, as provided for in subsection (3)(a), or for

children suffering from illness. The term includes a family day-care home, a day-care center, a group day-care home, or a facility providing care in a child's home for the purpose of meeting registration requirements for the receipt of payments as provided in 52-2-713. The term does not include:

- (a) a person who limits care to children who are related to the person by blood or marriage or under the person's legal guardianship, unless registration or licensure as a day-care facility is required to receive payments as provided in 52-2-713; or
- (b) any group facility established chiefly for educational purposes that limits its services to children who are 3 years of age or older.

(14) "Regular basis" means providing day care to children of separate families for any daily periods of less than 24 hours and within three or more consecutive weeks.

Further, Montana regulations define licensed child care facilities as serving more than 13 children on a regular basis, and registered facilities as serving seven-12 children on a regular basis in group homes, and three to six children in family homes. Legally certified providers that care for two or less children are certified through the state for payment purposes only, with minimal requirements including orientation and comprehensive background checks. As a result of these laws, the following categories are currently exempted from child care licensing: 1) preschools in accord with the definitions above, and 2) Legally Certified Providers.

With licensed and registered facilities recognized at STAR 1 and compliance with licensing is the first step toward quality, Montana intends to enhance licensing regulations and increase inspections for quality and accountability of programs. In FY 2013, 1077 inspections were conducted for 570 providers. Part of Montana's high quality plan to include all licensed and registered providers includes regulation changes to recognize STAR 1 criteria in child care licensing and registration standards, and includes changes to TQRIS eligibility to recognize licensed and registered programs.

Additionally, Montana is looking to develop and implement a licensing indicator system, which may be appropriate for programs that are at STAR 3 or higher. According to the National Association of Regulatory Administrators, *"The purpose of a licensing indicator system is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of an existing licensing system by refocusing the emphasis of the licensing process. A licensing indicator system is intended to complement, and*

*not replace, an existing licensing measurement system. Through use of the licensing indicator system, less time is spent conducting annual inspections of facilities with a history of high compliance with the licensing rules, and more time is spent a) providing technical assistance to help facilities comply with licensing rules and b) conducting additional inspections of facilities and agencies with low compliance with licensing rules.”*¹ The licensing indicator system for higher quality facilities that frequently exceed licensing standards and consistently meet higher tier level standards will recognize outstanding programs, while allowing licensing staff to focus attention on lower quality facilities. At the higher tier STAR levels, assessments are occurring as well. This approach should encourage child care providers to continue to improve the quality of their programs and will make them eligible for increased incentives and increased reimbursement rates for children qualifying for subsidized child care.

Inclusion in Montana’s Tiered Quality Improvement and Rating System

(b) A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System in which all licensed or State-regulated Early Learning and Development Programs participate

Montana’s high quality plan includes 100% of eligible licensed/registered child care providers in STARS by June 30 of the 4th grant year. *(Please refer to Table (B)(2)(c) on page 84 of Narrative for performance goals.)* The only time a licensed and registered facility would not be eligible in the program is if that facility has a provisional or probationary license, meaning that a licensing status has been reduced due to licensing violations and will be reinstated to regular status upon compliance with remedial measures, or if the facility does not meet all of the requirements but is attempting to comply within three months. Because health and safety standards are the foundation for quality, when a facility is in a probationary or provisional status, the focus is on compliance with licensing before they address quality improvement toward more progressive standards. Many times when facilities are in these statuses, they are receiving targeted technical assistance to improve. Legally certified providers are not included in the TQRIS plan, however, and Montana continues to evaluate how to support these providers in meeting the school readiness needs of the children in their care. It is possible that Montana’s home visiting model is the best fit.

¹ Fiene, R. and Kroh, K. (1995). A systematic approach to child care regulatory review, policy evaluation and planning to promote health and safety of children in child care: A manual for state and local child care and maternal and child health agency staff.” Zero to three. The National Center for Clinical Infant Programs. NARA Licensing Curriculum: Measurement Tools and Systems.

Services for Children with High Needs

With focus on serving children with high needs in quality early childhood settings, Montana's plan will recognize Head Start and Early Head Start Programs throughout the state at STAR 1. Additionally, throughout the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality matrix, Head Start Performance Standards are recognized as equivalent indicators in some cases. Montana intends to explore the reciprocity of Head Start Performance Standards with more specific indicators as part of the high quality plan as well. Early Head Start programs are required to be licensed in Montana, Head Start programs are not, though many are. The high quality plan will include Head Start programs, even if they are not licensed at STAR 1. This is true for tribal programs as well, including tribal Head Start, tribal Early Head Start, and tribal child care. Because tribal child care programs are administered through each specific tribe's CCDF state plan, tribal programs are not required to be licensed or registered by the State. Being recognized at STAR 1 will provide the opportunity to take advantage of the training and technical assistance available to similar programs regulated by the State, leading toward high quality care for high needs children.

Montana is committed to providing high quality experiences for children with high needs. Some of our children with the highest needs receive services from other programs including home visiting, Part C, and Child Protective Services (CPS). When families need childcare who are also receiving services from Part C, CPS, or home visiting, placement in STAR 3 or higher facilities will be prioritized. To accomplish this, the child serving agencies (CPS, Part C, and Home Visiting) will educate families on Montana's STARS System and will refer families to high quality facilities. In some cases, a home visitor, social worker, or family support specialist might accompany a family to tour and choose high quality child care. Montana's plan includes identifying data collection methodology to track referrals for high needs children to high quality care.

Additionally, as Montana continues implementing its high quality plan, STAR programs who take these children will have the opportunity to pursue the "contract for slot" concept. States have the ability to contract for slots in high quality facilities in accordance with the CCDF regulations. This means that approved early childhood providers will dedicate an enrollment slot for a child receiving CCDF subsidies, which will pay for the slot similar to private pay practices. While families always have choice in where they place their children for care, Montana will

encourage placement in high quality settings, including Early Head Start, Head Start and preschool programs. The reality is that childcare providers don't always enroll children with high needs. By providing a consistent revenue source for these providers and ensuring support through training, technical assistance, and coaching, they are more likely to include additional children with high needs in their programs. When children have IFSP's in Part C or a treatment plan in accord with CPS, it is critical that collaboration occur to assure that the child care program is part of the plan in meeting the needs of the child. To do this well, Montana has included in its high quality plan provisions to train cross sector professionals on Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3™) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social and Emotional (ASQ:SE) as a common developmental screening tool, the Early Learning Standards indicating a continuum of developmental skills and abilities, and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). This will assure that everyone has a common knowledge base. Additionally, continued training on trauma informed practices and routines based early intervention (RBEI) will serve as a framework in jointly meeting the needs of the child. By working together, the child, the family, and the child care provider will all be supported. Finally, with intensive strategies for these identified children; support for transitions between and among programs will be present, leading the way to effective transitions into kindergarten.

Montana's plan is ambitious, yet achievable, as we work to improve program standards, oversight, and support continuous quality improvement. This will allow children with high needs to have every opportunity to be supported in a high quality early childhood program, setting the stage for school readiness in kindergarten, thereby creating a foundation for lifelong learning and success.

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 4

Priority 4: Competitive Preference Priority -- Creating Preschool through Third Grade Approaches to Sustain Improved Early Learning Outcomes through the Early Elementary Grades. (10 points)

Priority 4 is designed to build upon the State's High-Quality Plan to improve birth through age five early learning outcomes, and to sustain and extend improved early learning outcomes through the early elementary school years, including by leveraging existing Federal, State, and local resources. The State will meet this priority based on the extent to which it describes a High-Quality Plan to improve the overall quality, alignment, and continuity of teaching and learning to serve children from preschool through third grade through such activities as--

(a) Enhancing the State's kindergarten-through-third-grade standards to align them with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards across all Essential Domains of School Readiness;

(b) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs from preschool through third grade, and building families' capacity to address these needs;

(c) Implementing teacher preparation and professional development programs and strategies that emphasize developmental science and the importance of protective factors, pedagogy, and the delivery of developmentally appropriate content, strategies for identifying and addressing the needs of children experiencing social and emotional challenges, and effective family engagement strategies for educators, administrators, and related personnel serving children from preschool through third grade;

(d) Implementing model systems of collaboration both within and between Early Learning and Development Programs and elementary schools to engage and support families and improve all transitions for children across the birth through third grade continuum;

(e) Building or enhancing data systems to monitor the status of children's learning and development from preschool through third grade to inform families and support student progress in meeting critical educational benchmarks in the early elementary grades; and

(f) Other efforts designed to increase the percentage of children who are able to read and do mathematics at grade level by the end of the third grade.

Aligning K-3 Standards with Early Learning Standards and Essential Domains

(a) Enhancing the State's kindergarten-through-third-grade standards to align them with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards across all Essential Domains of School Readiness;

On November 4, 2011, Montana adopted the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts, Literacy and Mathematics. These standards were developed through a state-led initiative sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governor's Association (NGA). Montana educators joined together to examine the Common Core Standards. They determined that the standards emphasize what students should know and be able to accomplish at every grade level, and prepare students to be college and career ready upon graduation from high school. In addition, Montana's Common Core Standards reflect the state's values and priorities, and include Indian Education for All content.

In adopting the Common Core Standards in English Language Arts, Literacy and Mathematics, Montana, for the first time, has standards that progress from K-12. Prior to the adoption, K-3

educators had to set their own trajectory for how to move students through the learning progression for readiness of 4th grade benchmarks.

Montana's *Early Learning Guidelines for Young Children* ages 3- 5 (published in 2004) and the *Infant and Toddler Early Learning Guidelines* (2009) have recently undergone an extensive revision. The new **Montana Early Learning Standards**, published in 2013, include the entire early childhood age spectrum—birth to age eight—and already align with the Essential Domains of School Readiness as well as the Montana Common Core Standards for Kindergarten through 3rd Grade in English Language Arts (ELA) and Literacy in Science, Social Studies and Technical Subjects and Mathematics. Through the Montana Early Learning Challenge, educators of children K-3 will use the Early Learning Standards to address the essential domains of school readiness in Approaches to Learning, Social-Emotional Development, Physical Development and Health, and Cognitive Development. These areas will be a priority in Professional Development opportunities.

Identifying and Addressing the Needs of Children with High Needs

b) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs from preschool thru third grade, and building family capacity to address these needs

Montana currently has in place several strategies to identify and address the health, behavioral and developmental needs of Children with High Needs from preschool through third grade. Through the Montana Behavior Initiative (MBI), strategies using Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) include early childhood through high school. Strategies focus on school and program-wide interventions toward promotion, prevention and intervention based on the Pyramid Model. Coaching and professional development exist for early childhood through grade 12 to implement a high fidelity process in schools. MBI aligns with the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Pyramid Model framework as well, providing for a continuum of mental health support throughout the various ages. Through the Montana Behavior Initiative (MBI) Summer Institute, P-3 teachers are offered a distinct strand for Professional Development in the areas of health, behavioral and developmental needs of Children with High Need.

For children who need targeted interventions and support, a partnership exists between the Department of Public Health and Human Services, OPI, Local Schools, and Community Providers to provide school based Comprehensive School Community Treatment (CSCT)

Programs for school based mental health services. This is available for public preschool, Head Start and school based programs.

For children that are identified and supported through Part C of the IDEA, transition strategies exist to continue supporting children in Part B of the IDEA if qualifications are met. As Montana continues to refine its transition profile process in support of the KEA, it is likely similar expectations and processes can occur for children entering part B.

Through Project REAL (Responsive Education for All), professional development exists to strengthen early learning provider capacity around building early literacy skills in the areas of oral language and vocabulary development (listening and speaking), phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, print awareness, and emergent writing skills. This also supports the social and emotional development along the developmental continuum. The Montana Comprehensive Literacy Plan, Birth through Grade 12, (November 2012) provides guidance for districts, schools and early childhood centers as they plan for comprehensive literacy instruction and assessment. Children from birth to school-age must have many opportunities to hear and practice language as they develop the foundational skills needed to become readers and writers. Montana's Early Learning Standards outline the early language and literacy skills young children need to know, understand and be able to do by the time they reach kindergarten. Instruction must also be culturally relevant and incorporate the distinct and unique heritage of Montana American Indians as required by Article X of the Montana Constitution and further described in the Montana Code Annotated (20-1-501). To demonstrate consistent cultural competency and understanding of Montana's rich history and American Indian cultures, Indian Education for All exists for early childhood grades and throughout grade 12. Indian Education for All offers teacher training and culturally appropriate resources so that all young children can learn about Montana's unique cultural heritage.

Cross sector learning continues related to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma informed practices. The National Native Children's Trauma Center, located at the University of Montana, provides training across multiple Montana systems, including schools, child care and juvenile probation, in trauma-informed interventions for early childhood. The Center is also assisting the State in developing trauma-informed child welfare practices through the Title IV-E waiver and a federal grant designed to work with tribal child protective services programs.

Throughout all of these strategies demonstrating cross sector work and a continuum across grade levels (preschool through grade 3), parent and family engagement is critical. The single most effective way to engage parents is through partnerships in supporting children in their education. By having cross sector strategies, programs, teachers, and parents are able to relate and support their child by using similar approaches and language. The first Parent Teacher Home Visit Training took place in Montana in 2009. Since then, there are approximately nine communities in various stages of implementation of the program. Some are implementing in middle school, such as in Poplar on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, where the historical legacy of boarding schools has left a deep divide between families and schools. Other communities, such as Great Falls, have implemented PTHVP in their Special education preschool, to engage and empower families to support students with special needs. Helena has developed a contract variance to expand the model to provide district-wide transitional home visits to all families the summer before kindergarten as a means to build a foundational relationship and to prepare all parties for the year to come. This model of transitional home visits is one which we are moving forward with around the state, and shows tremendous promise to support young children and their families in our state. The Montana OPI is engaged in the process of developing an agency-wide definition for family engagement, exploring effective evidence-based models in use in our state, and identifying resources throughout the OPI that can support schools and programs. The recently adopted Standards of Accreditation for comprehensive family engagement policy by the Montana Board of Public Education will inform the work as we move forward.

Implementing Teacher Preparation and Professional Development Strategies

c) Implementing teacher preparation and professional development programs and strategies that emphasize developmental science and the importance of protective factors, pedagogy, and the delivery of developmentally appropriate content, strategies for identifying and addressing the needs of children experiencing social and emotional challenges, and effective family engagement strategies for educators, administrators serving children from preschool through third grade;

Montana has nine post-secondary campuses offering teacher education programs that have been approved by the Montana Board of Public Education for teacher, administrator, specialist certification in Montana. Currently, there are no options for programs resulting in a P-3 educator license. Through the Montana Early Learning Challenge, The Superintendent of Public

Instruction and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education will consider a credential for a P-3 educator license.

The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) offers systems of support for early childhood educators through specific grants such as Striving Readers, Project REAL, and the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). These grants include ongoing professional development and some include coaching. OPI coordinates the annual Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI) Summer Institute with an Early Childhood track to provide professional development around Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and social emotional development.

The OPI also sponsors the Early Childhood Partnership for Professional Development (ECPPD) that shares information about early childhood professional development opportunities with OPI and the Early Childhood Services Bureau. The Professional Development Committee of the Best Beginnings Advisory Council is charged with identifying and promoting cross-sector early childhood professional development and coordinating with all other committees and groups to accomplish that task.

The Early Childhood Partnership for Professional Development (ECPPD) promotes quality services for young children and their families by providing networking opportunities for early childhood stakeholders to enhance professional competencies. Stakeholders include representatives from across the state of Montana from agencies, schools, and other organizations that work with young children and their families. The ECPPD:

- Supports and encourages professional development systems for early childhood practitioners
- Enhances collaboration between early childhood practitioners to build a shared knowledge base to facilitate respect and collaboration in order to strengthen communication and networking among early childhood practitioners.
- Develops a shared understanding and awareness of diverse early childhood career opportunities.

The purpose of the Montana Professional Development Partnership Project is to improve student achievement in Montana schools by providing state support and funding for high-quality professional development in core academic areas of math, reading, language arts, science and social studies that focuses on: (1) increasing the subject-matter knowledge of teachers; (2)

increasing teacher understanding and use of effective, research-based instructional strategies; and (3) increasing teacher competency in the use of educational technology. In addition, this program seeks to encourage and support the development of “regionalized” delivery models that will address the challenges and limitations that are presented by the geographic size and rural nature of Montana to the effective and efficient delivery of these high-quality professional development opportunities.

The OPI’s Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) uses a process which includes pre-service, in-service and technical assistance for parents, general education staff, administrators and other service providers with the end result being better programs and services for all children and youth. This is accomplished by collaborating with all stakeholders, disseminating best practices, and the evaluation of CSPD activities. Montana CSPD is organized through a statewide council and five regional councils with a mission to value and promote services, which:

- are proactive and flexible in meeting the needs of children and youth;
- ensure success for all by providing a safe and healthy environment that builds a sense of belonging and value for self and others;
- evaluate and disseminate best practices and achievements through ongoing high-quality professional development;
- encourage sensitivity to individual differences with recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity;
- are unified and integrated through a partnership of families, schools, agencies and communities;
- support recruitment and retention of high-quality educational personnel;
- are seen as a series of interdependent stages of continuous growth for personnel; and
- are designed to meet individual needs delivered through personalized, accessible and practical formats.

Implementing Model Systems of Collaboration

(d) Implementing model systems of collaboration both within and between Early Learning and Development Programs and elementary schools to engage and support families and improve all transitions for children across the birth through third grade continuum;

The OPI will implement the Montana Early Learning Challenge sub-grant process to continue sustaining the work done through its Early Reading First and Montana Striving Readers projects with three to five year old children in LEA and Head Start Programs. The goal of this sub-grant process is to add an additional five sites each year through a mentor program and technical assistance from the state. In Year 1, five LEAs or Head Start Programs will be awarded a sub-grant to choose a program within their geographic region to mentor as they improve their programming and, in some cases, begin the process of establishing a public preschool. As part of the process for applying, the second cohort will mentor another LEA or Head Start program in their geographic area that will be eligible to apply for a grant in Year 3. By Year 4, we will have up to 20 sites that will serve as model sites for other LEA and Head Starts in the State to learn from which will help us build capacity for universal pre-K. The amount of money awarded to each LEA's and Head Start will be based on the size and need of that site. LEA's and Head Start programs with enrollment of 1-50 students may be awarded up to \$200,000 per year. LEAs and Head Start programs with enrollment of 51-100 students may be awarded up to \$250,000 per year, and LEAs and Head Start programs with 101-200 students may be awarded up to \$300,000 per year. On-site technical assistance will be provided through job-embedded coaching through Instructional Consultants and OPI personnel.

Additionally, at the state level, Participating Agencies will work with Best Beginnings Community Coalitions and LEAs to implement a transition process in support of young children and as part of the KEA. The intent of the KEA strategy is to provide a context for kindergarten teachers to understand each individual child's strengths, abilities, and needs before kindergarten starts and in the first few months of kindergarten.

Enhanced Data Systems

(e) Building or enhancing data systems to monitor the status of children's learning and development from preschool through third grade to inform families and support student progress in meeting critical educational benchmarks in the early elementary grades;

GEMS is Montana's Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System. This data reporting system provides access to multiple years of data and interactive reports on student achievement, graduation rates, enrollment, program and course offerings, district and school profiles, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), and financial information reported by school districts. Additionally, GEMS provides users the ability to compare Montana schools side-by-side. Through the RTT-ELC, the Office of Public Instruction will explore the possibility of adding readiness data on Preschool students in public preschool and Head Start settings. The formative data gathered on readiness through the KEA strategy, will be stored in "sandboxes" within the longitudinal data system that will be available only to LEAs and their teachers. This data will be protected, yet used to monitor student progress in the journey towards College and Career Ready.

Other Efforts to Increase Literacy and Math Performance

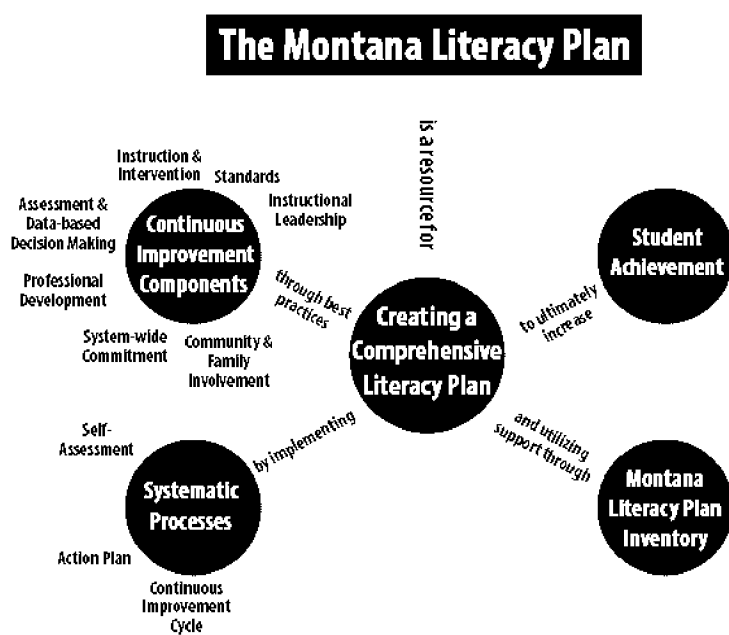
(f) Other efforts designed to increase the percentage of children who are able to read and do mathematics at grade level by the end of the third grade.

The Report of the National Early Literacy Panel, (2008) concluded that foundational reading and writing skills developed in the years from birth through age five have a clear and consistently strong relationship with later conventional literacy skills. Six variables representing early literacy skills had medium to large predictive relationships with later measures of literacy development: alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, rapid automatic naming (RAN), writing or writing name, and phonological memory. Five more early literacy skills were moderately correlated with at least one measure of later literacy achievement: concepts about print, print knowledge, reading readiness, oral language, and visual processing.

Based on the National Early Literacy Panel Report (2008), the MT Early Learning Guidelines, and the success of the Montana Early Reading First project, early language and literacy instruction will consist of evidence-based oral language/vocabulary development (listening and speaking), phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, print awareness and book knowledge,

listening comprehension, and emergent writing skills. This developmentally appropriate, explicit, intentional, and systematic instruction will take place in playful language- and literacy-rich environments.

The mini grants and extensive technical assistance that will be provided to target communities will allow them to develop comprehensive literacy plans that outline how they would systematically address student achievement in literacy using the Montana Literacy Plan (MLP) as their framework. There are seven Continuous Improvement Components (CIC's) that make up the Montana Literacy Plan.



These CICs reflect best practices that are grounded in evidence and the OPI's experience in successful implementation of the Reading Excellence Act, Early Reading First, and other successful programs. The systematic processes outlined in the Montana Literacy Plan show schools how to continually improve student outcomes, teacher professional learning, and system-wide processes within their organization. LEA and Head Start programs engaged in the mini grant and technical assistance effort will utilize a problem solving cycle for continuous improvement in which they do a needs assessment and identify whether they are exploring, implementing, or sustaining phase in each of the CIC's and identify areas of action based on

their status. They will then monitor the progress of the action goals utilizing data to inform additional decision making. In this way, local communities can devise their own strategies, based on community strengths and resources, to improve literacy among children in grades K-3. This same process can be effective as well in helping to improve math comprehension and skill among children with high needs.

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 5

Priority 5: Competitive Preference Priority -- Addressing the Needs of Children in Rural Areas. (5 points)

The State will meet this priority based on the extent to which it describes:

(a) How it will implement approaches to address the unique needs (e.g., limited access to resources) of children in rural areas, including rural areas with small populations; and

(b) How these approaches are designed to close educational and opportunity gaps for Children with High Needs, increase the number and percentage of Low-Income children who are enrolled in high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs; and enhance the State's integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services.

Montana is a state of vast land mass. At 147,042 square miles, it is the fourth largest state in the nation. But it is also a state of sparse population. According to the most recent U.S. Census, Montana's population grew to 1,005,141—topping one million for the first time in the State's history, yet still small compared with most other states. Montana is ranked 44th out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia for population density, making it the sixth most rural state. Of the state's 56 counties, 47 qualify as "rural" based on U.S. Census Bureau definitions, or 84%. Montana is also home to seven American Indian reservations, all of which qualify as rural. In all, 37 Montana counties and all seven American Indian reservations are considered high risk communities based on the needs assessment conducted for the Maternal, Infant and Early Child Home Visiting federal program.

While Montana is a rural state, the infrastructure does exist in most communities to provide access to early learning and development programs. During the 2011-2012 school year there were 142,350 students served in 415 public school districts across the state. All of the communities identified as high-risk pursuant to the MIECHV needs assessment have special education preschool services within their borders. Twenty-nine of the 37 counties and all seven American Indian reservations included in the high-risk classification offer a Head Start program or both Head Start and Early Head Start. If awarded a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, the State will target these high-risk communities and use the grant to enhance and expand the services being provided. The State will work to bring programs and resources, like the Best Beginning Community Coalitions, Maternal and Early Childhood Home Visiting services, Striving Readers and Healthy Montana Teen Parent sites that exist on a more limited basis to these high risk communities. Local libraries will be utilized to offer opportunities for early

literacy and parent support resources as indicated by local needs assessment and local collaborations.

Local schools in Montana, particularly in our rural areas, are the core of the community for families and community members. Public preschools will be offered by K-12 schools to offer quality early learning opportunities for children to ensure a safe and supportive environment that supports kindergarten readiness for children with high needs in rural areas.

Addressing the Unique Needs of Children in Rural Areas

(a) How it will implement approaches to address the unique needs (e.g., limited access to resources) of children in rural areas, including rural areas with small populations;

Montana has identified 43 communities as high needs in accord with Table A.1.2. and other factors. *(Please see pages 26 and 27 in the Appendix for a map and chart depicting the target counties.)* These high needs counties will be prioritized for service delivery based on Montana's high quality plan. In determining phased implementation of several of the projects within Montana's plan, it was important to match high needs communities with the capacity to provide services. The intention is to build on existing infrastructures to increase services, while identifying how services can be provided statewide and in communities where there are not a lot of services available. Identified communities include those that qualify for:

- Striving Readers/Early Reading First communities, as eligibility was based on specified criteria demonstrating high needs (free/reduced lunch, dropout rates, low income students not meeting AYP in reading, Title I, or more than 12% students with disability)
- At risk communities according to the MIECHV needs assessment (including those with high rates for pre-term and low birth weight babies, crime, children under 18 in poverty, child abuse and domestic violence)
- Head Start/Early Head Start communities eligible based on high poverty rates and other risk factors
- American Indian Reservations

Of the communities identified, 49% are considered rural or frontier. These communities are home to 53,000 children under the age of 5, which represents 74% of the State total pre-K

population. The vast majority of young children in these communities live in poverty and 72% of them are currently enrolled in Medicaid.¹

Montana is proud of the rugged and rural nature of our state, where driving west to east across the state is a distance equal to driving from Chicago to Washington DC. The rural landscape with its great distances, proud and independent people, mountain ranges, plains, small towns, farm and ranch lands, each with its own distinct beauty and character, can also be an impediment for families needing services. Montana pays close attention to the lives and needs of families raising children in rural and isolated areas and their needs are the focus of policies and practices.

This proposal for the Montana Early Learning Challenge outlines many strategies that align closely with the recent Best Beginnings Advisory Council's Statewide Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. Issues such as housing insecurity and cost, transportation, mental health support, services for young children, and lack of services in rural communities are impacting children's ability to learn and grow to be ready for kindergarten.

The outcomes we expect from the Montana Early Learning Challenge include:

- Increased number of children in rural areas who are participating in high-quality early childhood programs, particularly those with high needs
- Improved child care quality through the expansion of the State's TQRIS system
- Increased number of Best Beginnings Community Coalitions that are established to focus on improving early learning and development opportunities in their local communities
- Increased number of early childhood educators who access high quality professional development opportunities, including training that leads to degrees and credentials
- Transition profiles and KEA strategy indicate increased number of children are kindergarten ready

¹ Based on 2012 data provided by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Epidemiology and Scientific Support.

Closing Educational and Opportunity Gaps

(b) How these approaches are designed to close educational and opportunity gaps for Children with High Needs, increase the number and percentage of Low-Income children who are enrolled in high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs; and enhance the State's integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services

Several strategies are presented in the preceding pages that outline our approach to closing the achievement gap for children with high needs. The following is a summary of some of those strategies related to children living in rural areas.

Best Beginnings Community Coalitions will be established or strengthened and supported by a state coordinator who can assist them in their work. This support is crucial in helping facilitate networking, as was documented in interviews and surveys conducted as part of the Best Beginnings Needs Assessment.

The MIECHV program was awarded an expansion grant that will allow it to expand to an additional three rural/tribal communities. They will be accepting applications from interested organizations this fall to provide home visits to high risk families of newborns and toddlers.

There is a strong structure in place to support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren and other relative caregivers. In Montana, 6,692 grandparents are raising their grandchildren according to the most recent data.²⁾

Tribal and non-tribal Head Start and Early Head Start programs will have the opportunity to participate in Best Beginnings STARS to Quality to support their efforts at improving the quality of their services. These programs are critical in meeting the needs of the rural population, as they often provide home-based services and assist families overcome other service barriers like transportation and need for emergency services. Strategic work is being done with other tribal child care administrators to bring their child care programs into STARS and assist with licensing issues.

Montana has rich resources related to professional development for early childhood practitioners. The Early Childhood Project and Montana's Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium provide leadership in this effort, including developing the Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base (Core Knowledge and Competencies) and its companion Career Path. ECP has

² 2005-2009 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau

also been successful establishing an Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program and is now working on developing a strong Coaching Framework that can be implemented in rural areas. All approved professional development opportunities are reviewed for cultural relevance and aligned with Montana's new Early Learning Standards and the Early Care and Education Knowledge Base. At present, there is an intensive effort to research and develop more reliable methods of long-distance training that afford workers in rural communities the opportunity to get the training they need. Many families (and workers) in rural areas do not have high speed internet connections, which has hampered their ability to access existing resources. Montana's professional development providers and higher education institutions also support cultural competency training for non-native staff working with American Indian families.

There are 11 CCR&Rs agencies located across the state who provide training and technical assistance to early childhood programs related to participation in STARS as well as provide referrals and assistance to families in accessing quality care.

The new Kindergarten Readiness Assessment strategy will better inform kindergarten teachers on the skills and abilities of their entering students. It will be developmentally, community, and culturally relevant while still offering Montana the opportunity to conduct a statewide assessment process and unify data collection. This is a crucial step in tailoring instruction and reducing the achievement gap for students in rural areas.

The Montana Early Learning Challenge will also focus on improving coordination between Part C providers, preschools and K-12 to ensure that children with disabilities or delays have the support they need. This will include enhancing the utilization of Child Find and working toward a common process that includes a coordinated referral and follow up system.

These, and other strategies, will enable Montana to better meet the needs of young children living in rural areas and help close the achievement gap.

INVITATIONAL PRIORITY 6

Priority 6: Invitational Priority -- Encouraging Private-Sector Support.

The State will meet this priority based on the extent to which it describes how the private sector will provide financial and other resources to support the State and its Participating State Agencies or Participating Programs in the implementation of the State Plan.

Montana has a strong history of public-private partnerships to support early childhood. In 2006, the Governor's Office partnered with the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation to launch a school readiness initiative. It included a statewide summit and resulted in school readiness teams as well as a study of the economic benefits to the state of investments in early education. Now, Montana's private sector is poised and ready to support the State's high-quality plan. We are fortunate to have both business leaders and philanthropic foundations that recognize the importance of early learning and development and have stepped in when public support for these programs has been insufficient. Partnerships between the private sector and Montana's early childhood programs already exist, demonstrated by a host of Letters of Support from business and philanthropic leaders, and will be strengthened as we move forward. *(Please see business and philanthropic letters of support in the Appendix starting on page 73).*

"It's not rocket science. But it's the way we grow rocket scientists. It's not just the right thing to do. It's the smart one."

-Mike Halligan, Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation

As Mike Halligan, Executive Director of the **Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation** explains in the Foundation's letter of support, as the philanthropic arm of one of Montana's largest employers, business leaders have a "*vested interest in assisting the Governor and Superintendent Juneau in their effort to expand early learning opportunities for young children.*" Early learning is a priority for the Foundation, which has donated \$742,223 to programs specifically focused on children 0-8 in Montana and the Northwest where the Washington Companies operate. These funds have included support for the development of the Best Beginnings Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan and Early Learning Matters (ELM) in Polson, Montana. The mission of the ELM project is to partner with parents and the community to prepare children from birth to age five to succeed in school. In addition, the Foundation funded the \$12.5 million construction of the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Health and

Human Sciences in 2009 on the U of M Campus. Of that total, \$1 million went to the creation of the Learning and Belonging Preschool, a unique space specifically designed for child care, including children with special needs. A portion of the school curriculum is directed toward early childhood education best practices and professional development of teachers in the area of early childhood education.

The **Montana Childhood Initiative Funders Group (MECI)** is a consortium of funders that includes the O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation, the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, the Solid Rock Foundation and the Lora L. and Martin N. Kelley Family Foundation Trust. The goal of MECI is to make a difference in the lives of Montana's youngest children by strategically investing private funds. Currently this consortium is seeking proposals for programs that support Family, Friend and Neighbor caregivers for a \$105,000 grant over three years.

Some of the programs mentioned throughout this proposal have been successful because of their partnerships with the private sector. The Office of Public Instruction has raised \$616,000 in private dollars from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, Steele Reese Foundation, Student Assistance Foundation, State Farm Insurance, Optimum Cable Company, Northwestern Energy and First Interstate Bank for Graduation Matters Montana to support the development and engagement of community action teams. Best Beginnings STARS to Quality has partnered with businesses to offer incentives for STARS providers to achieve goals and improve quality. The Best Beginnings Advisory Council membership includes representation from philanthropy and business to strengthen public private partnerships and increase awareness of early childhood issues. Montana's Child and Family Services office partners with the Casey Family Foundation to improve outcomes for young children with high needs in the child welfare system. They have already committed \$125,000 for this purpose in 2014.

In addition to these large contributions from foundations and corporations, each local Best Beginnings Local Coalition is cultivating relationships with business leaders in their own communities, some of whom sit on the Council themselves. These local dollars support community-driven efforts to improve access to high quality early childhood programs for children and families.

BUDGET PART 1- SUMMARY

BUDGET PART I- TABLES

Budget Table I-1: Budget Summary by Budget Category--*The State must include the budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant. These line items are derived by adding together the corresponding line items from each of the Participating State Agency Budget Tables.*

OVERALL STATEWIDE BUDGET					
<u>Budget Table I-1: Budget Summary by Budget Category</u>					
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	1,566,720	1,644,061	1,670,494	1,696,940	6,578,215
2. Fringe Benefits	408,624	408,623	408,623	408,623	1,634,493
3. Travel	78,878	88,878	88,878	88,878	345,512
4. Equipment	117,075	21,450	21,450	21,450	181,425
5. Supplies	285,530	280,730	280,730	280,730	1,127,720
6. Contractual	1,641,750	1,661,750	1,661,750	1,661,750	6,627,000
7. Training Stipends	300,000	600,000	900,000	900,000	2,700,000
8. Other	140,327	378,209	1,446,923	3,434,541	5,400,000
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1- 8)	4,538,904	5,083,701	6,478,848	8,492,912	24,594,365
10. Indirect Costs*	282,626	285,204	288,438	291,674	1,147,942
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	1,191,750	2,258,500	3,325,250	4,392,000	11,167,500
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	6,113,280	7,727,405	10,192,536	13,276,586	37,309,807

14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	(b)(5)
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first \$25,000 of each contract included in line 6.

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other sub awards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside \$400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

Budget Table I-2: Budget Summary by Participating State Agency--The State must include the budget totals for each Participating State Agency for each year of the grant. These line items should be consistent with the totals of each of the Participating State Agency Budgets provided in Budget Tables II-1.

OVERALL STATEWIDE BUDGET					
<u>Budget Table I-2: Budget Summary by Participating State Agency</u>					
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Agency Name	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
DPHHS	6,013,702	6,925,496	8,598,131	11,215,907	32,753,236
OPI	1,681,054	2,762,342	3,851,479	4,940,631	13,235,506
OCHE	502,320	839,480	1,146,760	1,154,040	3,642,600
STATE LIBRARY	36,312	36,312	36,312	36,312	145,248
Total Statewide Budget	8,233,388	10,563,630	13,632,682	17,346,890	49,776,590

Budget Table I-3: Budget Summary by Project--*The State must include the proposed budget totals for each project for each year of the grant. These line items are the totals, for each project, across all of the Participating State Agencies' project budgets, as provided in Budget Tables II-2.*

OVERALL STATEWIDE BUDGET					
Budget Table I-3: Budget Summary by Project					
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
Governance	1,335,517	1,339,257	1,356,610	1,373,977	5,405,361
Workforce	1,617,060	1,954,393	2,261,939	2,269,485	8,102,877
TQRIS	2,740,763	3,687,337	5,359,973	7,977,749	19,765,822
K Readiness	1,066,750	2,133,500	3,200,250	4,267,000	10,667,500
Standards	1,098,767	1,032,317	914,552	911,789	3,957,425
Assessment	374,531	416,826	539,358	546,890	1,877,605
Total Statewide Budget	8,233,388	10,563,630	13,632,682	17,346,890	49,776,590

BUDGET PART I - NARRATIVE

Montana requests grant funds totaling **37,309,807** for the project period and will contribute at least \$12,466,783 in funds from other sources to support a total statewide project budget of **49,776,590**. The following four agencies will participate in the Montana Early Learning Challenge, working together to achieve better outcomes for all children in Montana, especially children with high needs:

Participating State Agencies:

1. Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS)
2. Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI)
3. Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE)
4. Montana State Library

Within the **Montana Early Learning Challenge**, there are six major projects. As these projects define interrelated functional areas, each has some relation to *virtually every* selection criteria.

Below are the **primary** selection criteria each project is designed to address:

Project	Selection Criteria
1. Governance	(A)(1) Past commitment to early learning (A)(2) Articulating State's rationale for reform agenda (A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning across state (A)(4) Developing a budget to implement/sustain work (B)(1) Developing common statewide TQRIS (C)(1) Developing/using Early Learning Standards (C)(3) Identifying/addressing needs of children with high needs (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families (D)(1) Developing a Workforce Competency/Knowledge Framework (E)(1) Understanding status of children's learning at kindergarten entry Priority 1: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs Priority 2: Including All Programs in TQRIS Priority 3: Understanding Children's Learning at Kindergarten Entry Priority 4: Creating Preschool through 3 rd Grade Sustained Outcomes Priority 5: Addressing the Needs of Children in Rural Areas
2. Workforce Development	(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning across state (B)(2) Promoting participation in State's TQRIS

	(B)(3) Rating and monitoring early learning programs (C)(1) Developing/using Early Learning Standards (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families (D)(1) Developing a Workforce Competency/Knowledge Framework (D)(2) Supporting early childhood educators in improving skills Priority 1: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs Priority 4: Creating Preschool through 3 rd Grade Sustained Outcomes Priority 5: Addressing the Needs of Children in Rural Areas
3. Tiered Quality Rating & Improvement System (TQRIS)	(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning across state (B)(1) Developing common statewide TQRIS (B)(2) Promoting participation in State's TQRIS (B)(3) Rating and monitoring early learning programs (B)(4) Promoting access for children with high needs (B)(5) Validating effectiveness of State TQRIS (C)(1) Developing/using Early Learning Standards (C)(3) Identifying/addressing needs of children with high needs (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families (D)(1) Developing a Workforce Competency/Knowledge Framework (D)(2) Supporting early childhood educators in improving skills Priority 1: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs Priority 2: Including All Programs in TQRIS Priority 5: Addressing the Needs of Children in Rural Areas
4. Kindergarten Readiness	(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning across state (B)(4) Promoting access for children with high needs (C)(1) Developing/using Early Learning Standards (C)(3) Identifying/addressing needs of children with high needs (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families (D)(2) Supporting early childhood educators in improving skills (E)(1) Understanding status of children's learning at kindergarten entry Priority 1: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs Priority 3: Understanding Children's Learning at Kindergarten Entry Priority 4: Creating Preschool through 3 rd Grade Sustained Outcomes Priority 5: Addressing the Needs of Children in Rural Areas
5. Standards	(A)(1) Past commitment to early learning (A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning across state (B)(3) Rating and monitoring early learning programs

	(C)(1) Developing/using Early Learning Standards (C)(3) Identifying/addressing needs of children with high needs (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families (D)(1) Developing a Workforce Competency/Knowledge Framework (E)(1) Understanding status of children's learning at kindergarten entry Priority 1: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs Priority 3: Understanding Children's Learning at Kindergarten Entry
6. Assessments	(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning across state (B)(3) Rating and monitoring early learning programs (C)(3) Identifying/addressing needs of children with high needs (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families (D)(2) Supporting early childhood educators in improving skills (E)(1) Understanding status of children's learning at kindergarten entry Priority 1: Promoting School Readiness for Children with High Needs Priority 3: Understanding Children's Learning at Kindergarten Entry Priority 4: Creating Preschool through 3 rd Grade Sustained Outcomes

DPHHS will serve as the lead agency with the other three agencies assuming critical roles congruent with their areas of expertise. Working together, the agencies will ensure a coordinated effort to achieve the goals laid out in the State Plan and identified for each of the projects. The chart below summarizes which participating agencies will be involved in each project.

DPHHS	OPI	OCHE	State
Lead Agency			Library
Governance (Project Lead)	Governance		Governance
Workforce (Project Lead)	Workforce	Workforce	
TQRIS (Project Lead)	TQRIS		
K Readiness	K Readiness (Project Lead)		
Standards (Project Lead)	Standards		
Assessment (Project Lead)	Assessment		

Project Overview: Montana has six connected and coordinated projects which constitute its State Plan to increase service quality to young children and their families. These projects remain distinct enough to ensure accountability and measure progress, yet are coordinated enough to build upon each other and leverage successes.

Organizationally within DPHHS, governance project staff will be housed in the Governor's Office of Early Childhood, a new office created under the Montana Early Learning Challenge. In addition, this office will consolidate current programs related to early childhood at DPHHS, as well as project staff needed to complete the proposed projects in this application. Further, project staff in DPHHS will take the lead in establishing and maintaining frequent communication and coordination across all Participating State Agencies and other partners and ensuring that all grant reporting is completed in an accurate and timely matter.

DPHHS is the appropriate State Agency to lead this initiative because of the number of existing programs already established within the Department, because of their capacity to engage in systems change, and due to the Department's history of successful collaboration with all other grant partners and Participating State Agencies.

Goals for the proposed projects were developed collaboratively through a series of meetings with all stakeholders, as well as by examining state-level data. Once goals were developed, primary responsibility for each activity was assigned to agencies based on areas of expertise and responsibility for current programs and services. Each Participating State Agency then worked within their local systems to discuss the projects and project participation. Finally, each State Agency developed a budget appropriate for its scope of work. In order to effectively carry out Montana Early Learning Challenge goals, DPHHS requests grant funds totaling \$20,286,453 (\$32,753,236 funds from all sources); OPI requests 13,235,506; OCHE requests \$3,642,600 and the State Library requests \$145,248.

From a project perspective, the overall budget requests combined for all Participating State Agencies involved in each project are as follows: Governance, including the creation of a new Governor's Office of Early Childhood, \$5,405,361; Workforce development enhancements \$8,102,877; TQRIS expansion \$19,765,822; Kindergarten Readiness, which includes the development of a public preschool model, \$10,667,500; Standards alignment and enhancements

\$3,957,425; and Assessment enhancements, including the development of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment process, \$1,877,605.

Similar to the entire development of the State Plan, the overall budget, project budgets, and agency budgets were developed through a collaborative and research-based process in order to allocate resources and responsibilities in ways that maximize benefits to the children and families served. Each agency's budgetary and project responsibilities are described in more detail in the agency budget narratives which follow.

BUDGET PART II- PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY

BUDGET PART II- TABLES

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget by Budget Category—*The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.*

DPHHS					
Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) Department of Public Health and Human Services					
Budget Category	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	1,059,137	1,112,558	1,112,558	1,112,558	4,396,811
2. Fringe Benefits	399,792	399,791	399,791	399,791	1,599,165
3. Travel	20,878	20,878	20,878	20,878	83,512
4. Equipment	117,075	21,450	21,450	21,450	181,425
5. Supplies	146,280	146,280	146,280	146,280	585,120
6. Contractual	1,591,750	1,591,750	1,591,750	1,591,750	6,367,000
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	140,327	378,209	1,446,923	3,434,541	5,400,000
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	3,475,239	3,670,916	4,739,630	6,727,248	18,613,033
10. Indirect Costs*	193,355	193,355	193,355	193,355	773,420
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	500,000
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	3,893,594	4,089,271	5,157,985	7,145,603	20,286,453
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	(b)(5)				
15. Total DPHHS Budget (add lines 13-14)					

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first \$25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside \$400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

Budget Table II-2: Participating State Agency Budget by Project—*State must include the Participating State Agency's proposed budget totals for each project for each year of the grant.*

DPHHS					
<u>Budget Table II-2: Participating State Agency</u> (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) Department of Public Health and Human Services					
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
Governance	922,018	910,591	910,591	910,591	3,653,791
Workforce	1,058,750	1,058,750	1,058,750	1,058,750	4,235,000
TQRIS	2,740,763	3,687,337	5,359,973	7,977,749	19,765,822
K Readiness	0	0	0	0	0
Standards	1,029,171	960,818	840,817	835,817	3,666,623
Assessment	263,000	308,000	428,000	433,000	1,432,000
Total DPHHS Budget	6,013,702	6,925,496	8,598,131	11,215,907	32,753,236

BUDGET PART II - NARRATIVE

Department of Public Health and Human Services - DPHHS

DPHHS will serve as the lead agency for the Montana Early Learning Challenge. As such, it will have responsibility for overall budget management and implementation of project activities. This includes responsibility for all grant reporting and adherence to rules and requirements of the federal Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge.

Pursuant to that task, DPHHS will participate in all 5 project areas: Governance, Workforce, TQRIS, Kindergarten Readiness, Standards, and Assessments. The major roles and responsibilities related to these projects are outlined in its Scope of Work summarized below:

Governance – Lead Agency, placement of new Governor’s Office of Early Childhood, staffing of Best Beginnings State Advisory Council

Workforce Development – Collaborating Agency

TQRIS – Lead Agency, oversight/management of Best Beginnings STARS to Quality TQRIS

Kindergarten Readiness – Collaborating Agency

Standards – Lead Agency, publishing Early Learning Standards, system integration

Assessments – Lead Agency, overseeing research and selection process for KEA

The project budgets that make up the DPHHS total budget were derived from a comprehensive assessment of current agency capacity and consideration of new areas of responsibility and the staffing and other costs associated with that work. Following is a line item description of the total DPHHS budget which incorporates the costs of each project and, in the case of personnel, identifies staff associated with each project.

1) Personnel: \$4,396,811 for 4 years (26 Total FTE).

All positions include 1.0 FTE on the Montana Early Learning Challenge and funds requested include a salary increase in the second year. Awarding of such increase is contingent on legislative approval.

Governance Related Personnel:

Position Title	CY 2014	CY 2015	CY 2016	CY 2017	CY 2014 - 2017
Governance:					
Communications Specialist	52,167	54,050	54,050	54,050	214,317
Budget Analyst	75,942	78,858	78,858	78,858	312,517
Training Mgr/Coordinator	68,183	70,762	70,762	70,762	280,467
Transition Coordinator	49,787	51,567	51,567	51,567	204,487
Administrative Assistant	47,414	49,091	49,091	49,091	194,687
Early Childhood Specialist	49,787	51,567	51,567	51,567	204,487
RTT ELC Grant Manager	49,787	51,567	51,567	51,567	204,487
Coaching & TA Specialist	49,787	51,567	51,567	51,567	204,487
	442,852	459,028	459,028	459,028	1,819,935

Communication Specialist will work on behalf of the entire grant and cross sector projects related to Montana Early Learning Challenge specific activities and will spearhead cross-agency communication. **Budget Analyst** will support the state budgeting and federal reporting requirements and conduct fiscal monitoring of contractors. **Training Manager/ Coordinator** will support cross sector training development and support in areas addressed in the grant, including implementing common assessment ASQ-3™ and ASQ: SE system wide, ACEs and trauma informed work, STARS required courses, and other workforce development system-wide statewide trainings. **Transition Coordinator** will provide support to families in transitions from one program to another, facilitate development of a statewide transition profile as part of KEA, and serve as a liaison between all participating state agencies. **Administrative Assistant** duties include supporting newly hired staff, document preparation, graphic arts, coordination of reports, and other duties. **Early Childhood Specialist** will support local participants in development of coalitions, needs assessments, strategic planning, and coordination of services. **Grant Manager** will ensure program reporting requirements are met, progress tracked, and that participating agency outcomes, plans, and budgets are monitored. **Coaching and TA specialist** will manage contracts and provide Coaching Framework oversight, monitoring coaching contracts, Resource & Referral Agencies and other Technical Assistance providers.

TQRIS Related Personnel:

TQRIS:					
STARS Program Manager	70,217	72,884	72,884	72,884	288,868
Infant Toddler Specialist	49,787	51,567	51,567	51,567	204,487
STARS ELS Cert. Specialist	51,567	51,567	51,567	51,567	204,487
STARS Program Specialist	51,567	51,567	51,567	51,567	204,487
	219,577	277,584	277,584	277,584	902,328

STARS Program Manager will manage Best Beginnings STARS to Quality, assuring coordination cross system, effective monitoring of STARS programs, and coordination of assessors, coaches, and program expectations. **Infant Toddler Specialist** will oversee and administer the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Program and Continuity of Care Stipends, provide support for expansion of infant and toddler programs, Early Learning Standards implementation, and STARS to Quality improvement planning for infants and toddlers. **STARS Early Learning Standards Specialist** will oversee the STARS ELS Certification Program and provide support for Early Learning Standards administration and quality improvement. **STARS Program Specialist** will assist the growing needs of STARS providers and programs due to growth in participants.

Standards Related Personnel:

Standards:					
Child Find Coordinator	49,787	51,567	51,567	51,567	204,487
Child Care Licensing Supv	70,217	72,884	72,884	72,884	288,868
Child Care Licensors	59,097	61,281	61,281	61,281	242,941
Child Care Licensors	59,097	61,281	61,281	61,281	242,941
Child Care Licensors	59,097	61,281	61,281	61,281	242,941
Child Care Licensors	59,097	61,281	61,281	61,281	242,941
Child Care Licensors	59,097	61,281	61,281	61,281	242,941
Child Care Licensors	59,097	61,281	61,281	61,281	242,941
Administrative Assistant	47,414	49,091	49,091	49,091	194,687
Administrative Assistant	47,414	49,091	49,091	49,091	194,687
Administrative Assistant	47,414	49,091	49,091	49,091	194,687
Administrative Assistant	47,414	49,091	49,091	49,091	194,687
	664,242	688,503	688,503	688,503	2,729,751

Part C Child Find Coordinator will create a consistent statewide approach to Child Find and use of ASQ-3™ and ASQ: SE. Part C does not have staff and they need this position to effectively improve service delivery. **Child Care Licensing Supervisor** will manage a complaint unit for investigating complaints different than regular monitoring of facilities. **Child Care Licensors** will manage additional monitoring and oversight and ensure that health and safety standards are met in licensed and registered facilities. Increased monitoring needs are projected because of federal rules changes and increased licensing standards. **Administrative Assistants** will assist Licensors with data entry and required paperwork for child care facilities and monitoring reports. This shifts the administrative functions to administrative staff, which is more cost effective than licensing staff fulfilling the administrative duties.

Assessment Related Personnel:

Assessment:					
Business Analyst	60,874	63,136	63,136	63,136	250,281
Epidemiologist	71,382	74,100	74,100	74,100	293,681
	132,256	137,235	137,235	137,235	543,962

Business Analyst will update state data systems to accommodate various data tracking scenarios as outlined by the grant. This position will work closely with the epidemiologist.

Epidemiologist will analyze data, data map, identify and track benchmarks and outcomes across the system, and make recommendations related to ease of data tracking. They will also maintain data consistency for reporting, validate the integrity of data and develop ad hoc reports.

2) Fringe Benefits: \$1,599,165 for 26 positions for 4 years

Fringe benefits are factored at 17% of salaries with an additional \$8,796 per year for employee health insurance. In addition to health insurance, fringe benefits include workers compensation, unemployment insurance, state and federal taxes, and retirement benefits for all personnel.

Total for 26 Positions	\$1,458,927	\$ 1,512,350	\$ 1,512,350	\$1,512,350	\$ 5,452,014
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Total Salary Costs for Personnel \$ 4,396,811

Total Fringe Cost for Personnel \$ 1,599,165

Total \$ 5,995,976

3) Travel: \$83,512 total for 4 years (73-74 trips per year or 294 trips over four years)

Travel is necessary for assessors, staff training, technical assistance, and coaching. It is estimated they will travel a combined total of 30 times per year for three days at a time at a cost of \$294 per trip, \$8,820 per year, and \$35,280 over the course of the grant.

More frequent travel is anticipated for the six (6) child care licensing staff as they increase the number of pre-inspections and ongoing inspections associated with the increased number of facilities. We anticipate each licensor will travel for five three-day trips (30 trips per year), at a cost of \$35,280 and five to six full week trips each per year (22 trips total) at a cost of \$12,056. It is estimated that licensors travel 42,000 miles annually.

A small amount of funding will be used for travel by staff that go for a single day for meetings, training, licensing, technical assistance, assessing or coaching, and are paid mileage and lunch at a cost of \$28 per day. It is expected there will be eight such trips per year for a cost of \$224 per year or \$896 over four years. State per diem is \$23 per day (\$5 breakfast, \$6 lunch, \$12 dinner). Motor pool cars average \$17 per day, \$47 for three days, or \$77 for a full week. The state rate at motels is \$89 per day including tax. Mileage reimbursement rate is .55 per mile. Travel will be reimbursed in accordance with all State travel rates.

Travel by Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
	20,878	20,878	20,878	20,878	83,512

4) Equipment: \$181,425 total for 4 years

Most equipment costs occur in the first year when a new employee office package (including office furniture, computer, phone, and data line at a cost of \$4,305 per employee) must be purchased and installed for new staff. Ongoing equipment costs include software licensing and telephone costs of approximately \$825 per employee, per year.

Equipment by Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
New employee office package at \$4,305 per employee for 26 FTE					
Ongoing equipment costs at \$825 per employee					
Total Equipment	117,075	21,450	21,450	21,450	181,425

5) Supplies and Rent: \$585,120 total four years

Included in supplies is the cost of office space rental for 26 employees estimated at \$460 per month per employee for a cost of \$574,080. General office supplies, postage and miscellaneous costs estimated at \$11,592 needed to support the personnel and to provide licensing, training, technical assistance, coaching, and evaluations for the facilities.

Supplies and Rent by Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Rent: \$460 per month per employee Supplies: \$11,592					
Total Supplies and Rent	146,280	146,280	146,280	146,280	585,120

6) Contractual: \$6,367,000 total for 4 years rules

DPHHS will follow required procurement procedures for professional and other contracts.

Description of Contracts by Project Area

Governance	Multimedia cross sector parent outreach and communication	Professional services to perform outreach and information sharing for parents and families	\$600,000
Workforce	Apprenticeship stipend	Individual contracts with Early Childhood providers for professional development awards	\$12,000
Workforce	Provider incentive and awards	Individual contracts with Early Childhood providers for professional development awards, Certified Infant/Toddler course and Certified Preschool course	\$385,000
Workforce	Early Childhood Project	Professional services for workforce, standard revision, professional development and career advising; Establish the Montana Family Engagement Framework; Implement statewide TA system and Coaching framework; and Facilitation of Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium.	\$3,838,000
TQRIS	Validation Study	Professional services investigator for data collection and validation study for TQRIS program	\$350,000

TQRIS	Branagh	Professional services to provide training, operation and management of data server, system software and technical support for users	\$150,000
TQRIS	ERS and PAS/BAS	Professional services for training and maintaining reliability, as well as license to conduct assessments.	\$83,130
Standards	Early Childhood Project	Develop training on ELS to inform assessment and curriculum	\$138,190
Assessment	Grant Evaluation	Professional services to evaluate progress and outcomes of grant	\$500,000
Assessment	ASQ-3™ and ASQ: SE	Professional services for identification of needs, training, identification of data tracking mechanism and materials	\$310,680
TOTAL			\$6,367,000

Contractual by Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
	1,591,750	1,591,750	1,591,750	1,591,750	6,367,000

7) Training Stipends - None

8) Other: \$5,400,000 total for 4 years

The total cost for the activities described below is \$17,866,783; however, \$12,466,783 will be contributed by other funding sources. The total “other” costs charged to this grant will be \$5,400,000. This line item includes STARS to Quality TQRIS expenses including incentives, tiered reimbursements to participating facilities, coaches, environmental rating scale assessments, and training. The cost of the statewide implementation of TQRIS is estimated based on a limited field test for STARS to Quality. Other expenses include:

- **Incentives for facilities** achieving STAR level two to five in graduated increments. Based on field test data, incentives are projected at \$7,249,774 total over four years.
- **Coaching** expenses to provide personal guidance to each facility as they progress through the STAR levels. Based on field test data, coaching costs are estimated at \$6,160,440.
- **Tiered reimbursement** for an additional bonus to state scholarship rates for child care. Bonuses will increase in increments with increased quality. Reimbursement projected to be \$3,349,921 over four years.

- **Training, coaching and supporting providers** on Trauma Informed Care using the Adverse Child Experiences study (ACE) is estimated to be \$220,000.
- **Providing training to facilities** on the administrative rating scales is estimated to cost \$296,000 over the four years.
- The cost of **supplies and materials** for training and technical assistance is estimated to be \$300,000 over four years.
- **Printing** STARS manuals and other resources for each provider @ \$290,648.

Other by Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
	140,327	378,209	1,446,923	3,434,541	5,400,000

9) Total Direct Costs: \$18,613,033 for four years

Direct Costs include all expenditures in 1) through 8) as follows:

Direct Cost (Sum of Tables 1-8)				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
3,475,239	3,670,916	4,739,630	6,727,248	18,613,033

10) Indirect Costs: \$759,180 total for 4 years

Montana DPHHS is federally mandated to use a cost allocation plan rather than an indirect cost rate. The last plan was approved by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on March 6, 2012 and remains in effect until a new plan replaces it or an amendment modifies it. These indirect costs represent approximately 3.8% of the grant funds requested for DPHHS.

Indirect Cost				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
\$193,355	\$193,355	\$193,355	\$193,355	773,420

11) Funds distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners through MOUs, interagency agreements, contracts, or other mechanisms authorized by State procurement laws: \$500,000 over four years

Funds will be used to expand the number of Best Beginnings Community Coalitions across the state. There are currently 23 coalitions, and the Montana Early Learning Challenge will expand to two additional communities. Costs per community are estimated to be \$200,000 (\$25,000 per year for each of 2 communities over four years). A partnership between ELC and MIECHV will support existing coalitions. Allocations to communities to support Community Coalition activities will be based on need and are expected to average \$4,000 per community. New coalitions will conduct a needs assessment and strategic plan specific to their community and build a process for evidence-based home visiting. In partnership with LEAs, existing coalitions will assist in developing a transition profile process for the KEA.

Funds distributed to Best Beginnings Community Coalitions				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	500,000

12) Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance: \$400,000 over 4 years

The State has set aside \$400,000 from its Total Grant Funds Requested for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Funds set aside for grantee technical assistance				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000

13) Total Funds Requested \$20,286,453 for four years broken out as shown below:

Total Funds Requested (9-12)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
9. DPHHS Direct Costs	3,475,239	3,670,916	4,739,630	6,727,248	18,613,033
10. DPHHS Indirect Costs	193,355	193,355	193,355	193,355	773,420

11. Funds for Best Beginnings Community Coalitions	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	500,000
12. Funds for grantee Technical	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000
13. Total Funds requested	3,893,594	4,089,271	5,157,985	7,145,603	20,286,453

14) Other Funds Allocated to the State Plan: \$12,466,783 over four years

Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan include:

- **CCDF Discretionary funding** will be used for tiered reimbursement for an additional bonus to state scholarship rates for child care. The total is estimated to be \$3,329,702, and will be paid as a direct service. As facilities progress in the STARS to Quality program, higher quality will be rewarded with higher reimbursements.
- **CCDF Quality** funds will be used for STARS to Quality incentives and training throughout the four years of the grant for a total of \$7,137,08.
- Montana is expected to receive **CHIPRA Bonus funds** of which \$2,000,000 has been designated to be used in the STARS to Quality program and will be expended in the first year of the grant.

Other Funds Allocated on the State Plan	Year 1:	Year 2:	Year 3:	Year 4:	Total
Total	2,120,108	2,836,225	3,440,146	4,070,304	12,466,783

15) Total Budget for four years is \$32,753,236 broken out by year as follows:

Total Budget	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
13. Total Funds requested	3,893,594	4,089,271	5,157,985	7,145,603	20,286,453
14. Other funds allocated on the State	2,120,108	2,836,225	3,440,146	4,070,304	12,466,783
15. Total Statewide Budget	6,013,702	6,925,496	8,598,131	11,215,907	32,753,236

BUDGET PART II- TABLES

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget by Budget Category—*The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.*

OPI					
<u>Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-1</u>					
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Budget Category	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	381,000	398,420	417,853	437,299	1,634,572
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	48,000	48,000	48,000	48,000	192,000
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	79,250	74,450	74,450	74,450	302,600
6. Contractual	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	100,000
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	533,250	545,870	565,303	584,749	2,229,172
10. Indirect Costs*	81,054	82,972	85,926	88,882	338,834
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	1,066,750	2,133,500	3,200,250	4,267,000	10,667,500
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	1,681,054	2,762,342	3,851,479	4,940,631	13,235,506
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total OPI Budget (add lines 13-14)	1,681,054	2,762,342	3,851,479	4,940,631	13,235,506
<u>Columns (a) through (d):</u> For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.					
<u>Column (e):</u> Show the total amount requested for all grant years.					

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first \$25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside \$400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

Budget Table II-2: Participating State Agency Budget by Project—*State must include the Participating State Agency's proposed budget totals for each project for each year of the grant.*

OPI					
<u>Participating State Agency-Level Budget Table II-2</u>					
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
Governance	377,187	392,354	409,707	427,074	1,606,322
Workforce	55,990	56,163	56,429	56,695	225,277
TQRIS	0	0	0	0	0
K Readiness	1,066,750	2,133,500	3,200,250	4,267,000	10,667,500
Standards	69,596	71,499	73,735	75,972	290,802
Assessment	111,531	108,826	111,358	113,890	445,605
Total OPI Budget	1,681,054	2,762,342	3,851,479	4,940,631	13,235,506

BUDGET PART II - NARRATIVE

Office of Public Instruction - OPI

OPI will serve as a Participating State Agency for the Montana Early Learning Challenge. As such, it will serve on the Governing Council and will execute project activities. Major project roles and responsibilities are outlined in its Scope of Work and summarized below:

Governance – Serve on Best Beginnings State Advisory Council and Governance Committee

Workforce Development – Collaborating Agency

TQRIS- Collaborating Agency

Kindergarten Readiness – Lead Agency, oversee implementation of public preschool model

Standards – Collaborating Agency, lead agency on developing standards for public preschools

Assessments – Collaborating Agency

The project budgets that make up the OPI total budget were derived from a comprehensive assessment of current agency capacity and consideration of new areas of responsibility and the staffing and other costs associated with that work. Following is a line item description of the total OPI budget which incorporates the costs of each project and, in the case of personnel, identifies staff associated with each project.

1) and 2) Personnel and Fringe Benefits: \$1,634,572 for 4 years

Funds are requested to support personnel from the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) with the implementation of the grant. Benefits are included in the requested amounts with a three percent increase for Year Two and Three, as well as insurance increases, which will be awarded only in accordance with actual increases made across the system.

Responsibilities of the **Director** include: being the lead on the project and the key in working with the collaborating partners and overseeing all projects related to successful completion of grant activities; responsibilities of the **Specialists** include supporting grant activities; the **Data Specialist** is charged with overseeing and managing the data assessment system; the **Administrative Assistant** is responsible for supporting key personnel in all tasks needed for project completion (i.e., scheduling travel, meeting and communications support). The **Assessment Team** will gather needed information and data for the project activities.

Personnel and Fringe Benefits	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Director 1 FTE	75,500	79,000	83,000	87,000	324,500
Specialist 1 FTE	75,500	79,000	83,000	87,000	324,500
Specialist 1 FTE	75,500	79,000	83,000	87,000	324,500
Data/Accreditation Specialist 1 FTE	75,500	79,000	83,000	87,000	324,500
Administrative Assistant .50 FTE	25,000	28,000	31,000	34,000	118,000
Accountant .25 FTE	14,000	14,420	14,853	15,299	58,572
P-T Assessment Team (10 Assessors work 20 hours/week for 4 weeks 2 times/year collecting child assessment data. Assessors earn \$25/hour)	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	160,000
Total Personnel	381,000	398,420	417,853	437,299	1,634,572

3) Travel: \$192,000 over four years

Funds are requested to cover state travel (mileage, lodging, and meals) for OPI personnel to conduct all Montana Early Learning Challenge activities and on-site visits to LEAs and Head Start sub-grantees. Travel funds also will cover all mileage, lodging, and meals for and participants to attend meetings to develop accreditation and licensure standards and assurances for public pre-schools. Participants will include key personnel from OPI, OCHE and MBPE, as well as teachers, administrators and others who will be critical to successful implementation. Mileage reimbursement is factored at .55 per mile. Travel will be reimbursed using state travel rates at the time the travel is conducted.

Travel	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
240 miles/week, OPI Implementation Team for 40 weeks/year, state motor pool car services, and meals and lodging at state rate costs for OPI personnel to support up to 35 LEAs and Head Start programs and grant activities.	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	160,000
Travel, meals, and lodging for 3 two-day statewide meetings and 10 regional meetings for 20 participants (accreditation); three one-day statewide meetings for 10 participants (licensure)	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	32,000
Total Travel	48,000	48,000	48,000	48,000	192,000

4) and 5) Equipment and Supplies: The OPI personnel will use iPads to monitor sub-grantee project data while on site and at workshops. The iPads will be used during on-site visits to LEAs and Head Start programs to gather data about instructional effectiveness during classroom walkthroughs/observations. Student data will be managed through an online database that will be utilized to determine if student progress is being made towards reaching the target goals and the walkthrough/observation data will be utilized to determine if there are increases in teacher effectiveness. The supplies and professional development materials will ensure that the professional development has a direct impact on increasing school readiness for Children with High Needs by increasing teacher instructional effectiveness, and using the data to make informed instructional decisions.

General Supplies	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
iPads for 5 OPI Personnel (\$800/each)	4,800	0	0	0	4,800
Assessment Supplies (data management systems for collecting and storing data).	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	20,000
Office Supplies (\$100 per month per OPI team member for paper, toner cartridges, binder clips etc.)	7,200	7,200	7,200	7,200	28,800
Total General Supplies	17,000	12,200	12,200	12,200	53,600
Supplies for Professional Development	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
PD, \$3,000 per 8 meeting days for space and materials (not printing).	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	96,000
PD for sub grant process including all PD and technical assistance identified for stakeholders \$3,000 per 8 meeting days.	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	96,000
\$3,000 per day for 19 meeting days for space and materials for meetings related to development of public pre-school accreditation and licensure standards and assurances	14,250	14,250	14,250	14,250	57,000
Total Supplies for Professional Devp't	62,250	62,250	62,250	62,250	249,000
Total Supplies	79,250	74,450	74,450	74,450	302,600

6. Contract: \$100,000 over four years

Contract training funds will allow the contracted PD providers to effectively support the sub-grantees during Statewide Workshops and through on-site visits to ensure all LEAs and Head Start programs have the necessary training to effectively implement all evidence-based instruction and assessment practices.

Contractual	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Training	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	100,000
Total Contractual	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	100,000

7) and 8) Training stipends and Other: None**9) Total Direct Costs over four years: \$2,229,172**

Direct Cost (Sum of Tables 1-8)				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
533,250	545,870	565,303	584,749	2,229,172

10) Total Indirect Costs over four years: \$338,834

Indirect costs calculated by applying the IDC rate of 15.2% to personnel and operating costs, including the first \$25,000 of contract services

Indirect Cost				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
81,054	82,972	85,926	88,882	338,834

11) Funds distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, or other partners through MOUs, interagency agreements, contracts, or other mechanisms authorized by State procurement laws. Total for four years is \$10,667,500

The OPI will implement the Montana Early Learning Challenge sub-grant process that will continue to sustain the work that has been done through the Montana Partnership of Early Literacy-Early Reading First (MTPEL-ERF) and Montana Striving Readers Project (MSRP) with three to five year old children in LEA and Head Start Programs. The goal of this sub-grant process is to add an additional five sites each year to build community capacity to improve early literacy and school

readiness skills through a mentor program and technical assistance from the State. In Year One, five LEAs or Head Start programs will be awarded a sub-grant and will choose a program within their geographic region to mentor. Each successive year, the past year's selected sites will be expected to mentor a new cohort of sites and will receive a sub grant to accomplish that. By Year Four of the grant, we will have up to 20 model sites for other LEA and Head Start programs throughout the state, which will help us build capacity for universal Pre-K across the state. The amount of money awarded to each LEA and Head Start will be based on the size and need of that site. LEA's and Head Start programs with enrollment of one to 50 students may be awarded up to \$200,000 per year. LEA's and Head Start programs with enrollment of 50-100 students may be awarded up to \$250,000 per year, and LEA's and Head Start programs with 100-200 students may be awarded up to \$300,000 per year.

LEAs and Head Start programs will be required to fill out the LEA and Head Start Budget as part of the sub-grantee process. In the application budget, they will be asked to identify estimated costs in the required categories that they hope to cover through the sub-grant. Eligible categories of sub grant funding include: personnel related to mentoring and technical assistance role; travel and professional development; equipment; supplies and materials; contractual expenses; and indirect costs. Each LEA and Head Start program applying for a sub grant will also be expected to provide a budget narrative that demonstrates evidence that the costs relate to the activities and objectives of their sub-grant applications and that the costs are reasonable and allowable, and fall within the guidelines of the project. OPI will closely monitor the progress, outcomes and expenditures of each sub grant. The figures below are the projected funds to be awarded by OPI through sub-grants based on school size.

LEA and Head Start Budget Projections (Average of small and large schools/centers)	Year 1: 5 sites	Year 2: 10 sites	Year 3: 15 sites	Year 4: 20 sites	Total
Average of large and small LEAs and Head Starts over 4 years	1,066,750	2,133,500	3,200,250	4,267,000	10,667,500

On-site technical assistance will be provided through job-embedded coaching through Instructional Consultants and OPI personnel. The funding for technical assistance from Instructional Consulting will be distributed to the LEA's and Head Start sub-grantees.

12) Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance: This budget line is covered in the DPHHS Agency Budget and will not be allocated to OPI agency budget.

13) Total Funds Requested: \$13,235,506

Total Funds Requested (9-12)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
SEA Budget	533,250	545,870	565,303	584,749	2,229,172
Indirect Cost	81,054	82,972	85,926	88,882	338,834
LEA and HS Program Budget	1,066,750	2,133,500	3,200,250	4,267,000	10,667,500
Total Budget	1,681,054	2,762,342	3,851,479	4,940,631	13,235,506

14) Other Funds Allocated to the State Plan: \$ 0

Multiple divisions within OPI will be working collaboratively to support preschool children with high needs through numerous programs. These divisions include Indian Education for All's SIG schools, students identified with disabilities who are receiving Special Education services, Early Childhood MBI and RTI sites, and those who are participating in the EC Project REAL program. The costs for these sites to attend joint trainings and to receive ongoing technical assistance with the processes that align with the Montana Early Learning Challenge will be covered through those specific programs and are not included here.

15) Total OPI Budget for four years is \$13,132,979

Total Budget	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
SEA Budget	511,000	523,620	543,053	562,499	2,140,172
Indirect Cost	77,672	79,590	82,545	85,500	325,307
LEA and HS Program Budget	1,066,750	2,133,500	3,200,250	4,267,000	10,667,500
Other Funds (14)	0	0	0	0	0
Total Budget	1,655,422	2,736,710	3,825,848	4,914,999	13,132,979

BUDGET PART II- TABLES

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget by Budget Category—*The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.*

OCHE					
<u>Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency</u> (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education					
Budget Category	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	100,500	107,000	114,000	121,000	442,500
2. Fringe Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
3. Travel	10,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	70,000
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	240,000
6. Contractual	25,000	45,000	45,000	45,000	160,000
7. Training Stipends	300,000	600,000	900,000	900,000	2,700,000
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	495,500	832,000	1,139,000	1,146,000	3,612,500
10. Indirect Costs*	6,820	7,480	7,760	8,040	30,100
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0		0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	502,320	839,480	1,146,760	1,154,040	3,642,600
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total OCHE Budget (add lines 13-14)	502,320	839,480	1,146,760	1,154,040	3,642,600
<u>Columns (a) through (d):</u> For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category. <u>Column (e):</u> Show the total amount requested for all grant years.					

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first \$25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside \$400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

Budget Table II-2: Participating State Agency Budget by Project—*State must include the Participating State Agency's proposed budget totals for each project for each year of the grant.*

OCHE					
Budget Table II-2: Participating State Agency (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education					
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
Governance	0	0	0	0	0
Workforce	502,320	839,480	1,146,760	1,154,040	3,642,600
TQRIS	0	0	0	0	0
K Readiness	0	0	0	0	0
Standards	0	0	0	0	0
Assessment	0	0	0	0	0
Total OCHE Budget	502,320	839,480	1,146,760	1,154,040	3,642,600

BUDGET PART II - NARRATIVE

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

OCHE will serve as a Participating State Agency for the Montana Early Learning Challenge. As such, it will serve on the Governing Council and will execute project activities. Major project roles and responsibilities are outlined in its Scope of Work and summarized below:

Governance – Serve on Best Beginnings State Advisory Council and Governance Committee

Workforce Development – Collaborating Agency

The project budgets that make up the OCHE total budget were derived from a comprehensive assessment of current agency capacity and consideration of new areas of responsibility and the staffing and other costs associated with that work. Following is a line item description of the total OPI budget which incorporates the costs of each project and, in the case of personnel, identifies staff associated with each project.

1) and 2) Personnel and Fringe benefits: \$442,500 over four years

Funds are requested to support personnel from the OCHE with the implementation and oversight of the grant. Benefits are included in the requested amounts with a three percent increase for Year Two and Three, as well as insurance increases. The **Project Manager** will take the lead on the project, communicate with other participating agencies and be responsible for successfully implementing grant activities. The **Administrative Assistant** will support the work of the Project manager.

Personnel and Fringe Benefits	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Project Manager 1 FTE	75,500	79,000	83,000	87,000	324, 500
Administrative Assistant .50 FTE	25,000	28,000	31,000	34,000	118,000
Total Personnel	100,500	107,00	114,000	121,000	442,500

3) Travel: \$70,000 total for 4 years

Funds are requested to cover state travel, (mileage, lodging, and meals) for OCHE personnel to conduct all early childhood professional career pathway project development activities and

on-site visits to two-year and four-year campuses. Sub-grantees will be paid in accordance to state travel rates at the time of travel.

Travel local mileage rate .55	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
240 miles/week, OCHE Program Manager and campus personnel to support programs, planning meetings/conferences, and grant activities including certificate to two-year to four-year pathway development. Costs include use of state motor pool car services, and meals and lodging at state rate costs.					
Total Travel	10,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	70,000

4) Equipment: none

5) Supplies: \$240,000 over four years

The supplies and professional development materials will ensure consistent implementation of curriculum.

Supplies	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Office Supplies (\$for program manager for paper, toner cartridges, binder clips, copper conferencing, etc.)	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	8,000
PD, regional conference/meeting expense.	34,000	34,000	34,000	34,000	136,000
PD for sub grant process including all PD and technical assistance identified for stakeholders \$3,000 per 8 meeting days.	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	96,000
Total Supplies	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	240,000

6) Contractual: \$160,000 over four years

These funds will allow the contracted PD providers to effectively support the sub-grantees during Statewide Workshops and provide oversight through on-site visits to support curriculum design and pathway coordination from two-year to four-year and graduate early childhood levels.

Contractual	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Training	25,000	45,000	45,000	45,000	160,000
Total Contractual	25,000	45,000	45,000	45,000	160,000

7) Training stipends: \$2,700,000 over four years

OCHE will develop MOUs with participating PCPP campuses in order to provide training stipends for qualified early childcare practitioners who are enrolled at participating two-year and four-year college institutions. Campuses will be reimbursed for qualifying students based on the average Academic Year Rate for tuition and fees. For example, \$3,200, divided by 30 credits = \$107 per credit. Average tuition and fees will be recalculated each year by participating campus.

The PCPP would be:

- Offered through consortia of public two-year colleges/programs and participating four-year colleges throughout Montana (including participating Tribal Colleges)
- For Early Childhood Education classes only
- For individuals employed as child caregivers in center-based programs, family child care providers or family group homes

To be Eligible, students must:

- Work or volunteer or serve as an intern in a child care center or be a family child care provider or be a family group home provider/employee
- Identify a Pathway (Goal) and pursue the Early Care and Education (ECE) coursework to accomplish that Pathway
- Complete all courses paid for by the PCPP with a grade of “C” or better to be eligible for continued funds

The PCPP (funded through the grant) would provide:

- Tuition for one to six credits per semester (Total 12 credits per school year)
- Tuition to cover approved early childhood courses offered by consortia members.
- Participating students use other funding sources such as Pell grants for the non-early childhood education courses (i.e. general education courses).
- Textbook stipend for \$10 per credit each semester at college bookstore. Based on the average tuition calculated by campus. Funds limited to tuition. No funds go directly to students (i.e. other financial aid covers costs).

Training Stipends	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Tuition & \$10 per book per reimbursement for qualified students	300,000	600,000	900,000	900,000	2,700,000
Total	300,000	600,000	900,000	900,000	2,700,000

8) Other: none

9) Direct costs: \$3,612,500 over four years

Direct Cost (Sum of Tables 1-8)				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
495,500	832,000	1,139,000	1,146,000	3,612,500

10) Indirect costs: \$30,100 over four years

Indirect costs calculated by applying the 4% IDC rate to personnel and operating costs (travel and supplies).

Indirect Cost				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
\$6,820	\$7,480	\$7,760	\$8,040	\$30,100

11) Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners: None

12) Funds set aside for grantee technical assistance: This budget line is covered in the DPHHS Agency Budget and will not be allocated to OCHE agency budget.

13) Total Funds Requested: \$3,642,600 over four years

Total Funds Requested (9-12)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
9. Total Direct costs	495,500	832,000	1,139,000	1,146,000	3,612,500
10. Indirect Costs*	6,820	7,480	7,760	8,040	30,100
13. Total Grant Funds Requested	502,320	839,480	1,146,760	1,154,040	3,642,600

BUDGET PART II- TABLES

Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency Budget by Budget Category—*The State must include the Participating State Agency's budget totals for each budget category for each year of the grant.*

Montana State Library					
<u>Budget Table II-1: Participating State Agency</u> (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) Montana State Library					
Budget Category	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	26,083	26,083	26,083	26,083	104,332
2. Fringe Benefits	8,832	8,832	8,832	8,832	35,328
3. Travel	0	0	0	0	0
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	0	0	0	0	0
6. Contractual	0	0	0	0	0
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	0	0	0	0	0
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	34,915	34,915	34,915	34,915	139,660
10. Indirect Costs*	1,397	1,397	1,397	1,397	5,588
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	0	0	0	0	0
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	36,312	36,312	36,312	36,312	145,248
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Montana State Library Budget (add lines 13-14)	36,312	36,312	36,312	36,312	145,248
Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.					

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first \$25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside \$400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

Budget Table II-2: Participating State Agency Budget by Project—*State must include the Participating State Agency's proposed budget totals for each project for each year of the grant.*

Montana State Library					
<u>Budget Table II-2: Participating State Agency</u> (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b)) Montana State Library					
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
Governance	36,312	36,312	36,312	36,312	145,248
Workforce	0	0	0	0	0
TQRIS	0	0	0	0	0
K Readiness	0	0	0	0	0
Standards	0	0	0	0	0
Assessment	0	0	0	0	0
Total Montana State Library Budget	36,312	36,312	36,312	36,312	145,248

BUDGET PART II - NARRATIVE

Montana State Library

The Montana State Library will serve as a Participating State Agency for the Montana Early Learning Challenge. As such, it will serve on the Governing Council and will execute project activities. Major project roles and responsibilities are outlined in its Scope of Work and summarized below:

Governance – Serve on Best Beginnings State Advisory Council and Governance Committee

1) Personnel and Fringe benefits: \$104,332 over four years

The Early Literacy Coordinator at the Montana State Library will be responsible for developing programs and services for libraries to implement locally that meet the state's early learning plan and Early Learning Standards as determined by the community level needs assessments and strategic plans. The **Coordinator** will participate in the statewide Best Beginnings Advisory Council (BBAC) and will continue to advise the BBAC on new and innovative ways libraries can serve as conduits of early learning using the state's high quality plan and Early Learning Standards in local communities. The Coordinator will encourage libraries to be resources for professional development for early learning in their local communities by coordinating with DPHHS, OPI and OCHE to offer "train the trainer" workshops designed to help parents and caregivers understand the value of language and literacy, and how to model positive early learning opportunities for their children.

The Coordinator will build capacity of librarians to play leadership roles in their communities' early literacy efforts by assisting librarians to make connections to the resources that exist within their local communities that serve Montanans from birth to five years old, including their local advisory councils. Finally, the Coordinator will educate Montana librarians about the latest in early learning research by working with DPHHS, OPI and the BBAC to conduct trainings for librarians demonstrating how to incorporate the latest in early learning research into their programming and training for parents and caregivers offered at each library.

Personnel and Fringe Benefits	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Coordinator	26,083	26,083	26,083	26,083	104,332
Fringe Benefits	8,832	8,832	8,832	8,832	35,328
Total Personnel	34,915	34,915	34,915	34,915	139,660
Activities: All activities listed throughout narrative will be implemented by the above personnel.					

3) – 8) None

9) Direct costs: \$139,660 over four years

Direct Cost (Sum of Tables 1-8)				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
34,915	34,915	34,915	34,915	139,660

10) Indirect costs: \$5,588 over four years

Indirect costs calculated by applying a 4% IDC rate to personnel and operating costs

Indirect Cost				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
1,397	1,397	1,397	1,397	5,588

11) Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners: None

12) Funds set aside for grantee technical assistance: This budget line is covered in the DPHHS Budget and will not be allocated to the Montana State Library agency budget.

13) Total Funds Requested: \$145,248 over four years

Total Funds Requested (9-12)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
9. Total Direct costs	34,915	34,915	34,915	34,915	139,660
10. Indirect Costs*	1,397	1,397	1,397	1,397	5,588
13. Total Grant Funds Requested	36,312	36,312	36,312	36,312	145,248

BUDGET: INDIRECT COST INFORMATION

To request reimbursement for indirect costs, please answer the following questions:

<p style="text-align: center;">Office of Public Instruction</p> <p>Does the State have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal government?</p> <p>YES <input checked="" type="radio"/></p> <p>NO <input type="radio"/></p> <p>If yes to question 1, please provide the following information:</p> <p>Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (mm/dd/yyyy):</p> <p>From: <u>7/1/2013</u> To: <u>6/30/2016</u></p> <p>Approving Federal agency: <u> X </u>ED <u> </u>HHS <u> </u>Other</p> <p><i>(Please specify agency):</i> _____</p>

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

Does the State have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal government?

YES ☒
NO ☐

If yes to question 1, please provide the following information:

Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (mm/dd/yyyy):

From: 7/1/2011 To: 6/30/2014

Approving Federal agency: ☒ ED ☐ HHS ☐ Other

(Please specify agency): _____

Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS)

Does the State have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal government?

YES ☒
NO ☐

If yes to question 1, please provide the following information:

Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (mm/dd/yyyy):

From: 7/1/2009 To: 6/30/2014

Approving Federal agency: ☐ ED ☒ HHS ☐ Other

(Please specify agency): _____

NOTE: Revisions to the DPHHS Indirect Cost Agreement occurred 9/30/2011 and 1/30/2012.

Montana State Library

Does the State have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal government?

YES ☒
NO ☐

If yes to question 1, please provide the following information:

Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (mm/dd/yyyy):

From: N/A To: N/A

Approving Federal agency: ☐ ED ☐ HHS ☒ Other

(Please specify agency): IMLS

NOTE: The Montana State Library has an open ended agreement through the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences (IMLS) which can be found in statute. The indirect cost rate is 4%.